

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A new theoretical perspective on deception detection: On the psychology of instrumental mind-reading

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To be able to assess the veracity of statements offered by suspects, witnesses and alleged victims is of paramount importance in legal settings. The aim of this paper is to provide an initial piece of scientific support for the idea that psychologically informed mind-reading can improve people's ability to detect deception. To this end, a theoretical framework is sketched; a framework resting upon psychological notions from three domains: (a) the psychology of mind-reading, (b) the psychology of self-regulation, and (c) the psychology of guilt and innocence. Importantly, the term mind-reading is used in an instrumental (vs descriptive) manner, where the goal is to improve the ability to predict a person's behaviour (not to read the content of a person's mind). It is argued that the mind-reading process can be facilitated by theoretical and empirical work pertaining to 'the psychology of guilt' and 'the psychology of innocence'. Using psychologically informed mind-reading, predictions of guilty and innocent suspects' behaviour are specified, and gauged against existing empirical work. Finally, a recently published training study is used to illustrate how the outcome of instrumental mind-reading can be translated into interview tactics, and ultimately improve interviewers' ability to detect deception.

Keywords: mind-reading; deception detection; interviews; interrogations

Introduction

One of the most interesting sources of mind-reading in criminal contexts is the writings of Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). Poe's fascination for mind-reading peaks in the stories about his alter ego, detective Auguste Dupin. In *The Purloined Letter*, Dupin is called upon to find a letter of extraordinary importance, which a clever Minister is known to have hidden in his home (Poe, 1845/1979). The Prefect of the Parisian police and his men search the Minister's home for months, but without success. They look for secret drawers, probe all cushions with fine long needles, examine legs in the furniture for cavities, and search the grounds around the house for the hiding place for the letter but without success. Dupin reflects on the case and attributes the Parisian police's failure to

'... ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their own ideas of ingenuity and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which they would have hidden it.' (p. 452).

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Dupin highlights some of the most central issues of mind-reading, as the term will be defined and used in the present context. First, the Prefect failed to mind-read the Minister, whereas the Minister performed a mind-reading of the Prefect. Hence, the Minister was able to predict the actions taken by the police in order to try to find the stolen letter, whereas the police failed to reconstruct the actions taken by the Minister in order to hide it. Second, Dupin draws our attention to why this case was so difficult to solve: (a) the police spent too much time thinking about their own strategies and (b) their reasoning was biased by projection and false consensus. We will define and discuss these terms later in this paper. We will also advance the argument that mind-reading has an important but so far disregarded role to play in the process of detecting deception, and that the reading of a suspect's mind can be improved by utilizing psychological theory on human behaviour and reasoning.

To be able to assess the veracity of statements given by suspects, witnesses and alleged victims is key in legal settings. These efforts have resulted in an impressive corpus of studies showing that people are rather poor at discriminating between liars and truth tellers (Bond & DePaulo, 2006, Granhag & Strömwall, 2004a). The same body of research also shows that presumed experts, such as police officers, FBI agents, CIA agents and psychiatrist do not seem to outperform lay people (Bond & DePaulo, 2006), and hold the same misconceptions about cues to deception as lay people (Strömwall, Granhag, & Hartwig, 2004). For a recent debate on lie-catching expertise, see Bond and Uysal (2007), and O'Sullivan (2007).

Deception research conducted so far has very much focused on the lie-catchers' strategies, and neglected strategies applied by suspects (Granhag & Strömwall, 2004b). Furthermore, research on deception has to a large extent overlooked the fact that in many criminal investigations there is potentially incriminating information against the suspect (e.g. witness statements, physical evidence, etc). Research shows that people report relying partly on the consistency between a person's statement and physical evidence when assessing veracity (Park, Levine, McCornack, Morrison, & Ferrara, 2002, for similar findings see Greuel, 1992; and Granhag, Strömwall, & Hartwig, 2005)

In this paper, we will introduce a number of theoretical notions which can be of assistance in understanding the psychology of guilt and innocence (notions which, combined, constitute a theoretical framework). Furthermore, using psychologically informed mind-reading, predictions of guilty and innocent suspects' behaviour will be specified and gauged against existing empirical work. Finally, and in order to illustrate how the outcome of mind-reading can be translated into interview tactics, a recently published training study will be summarized.

The psychology of mind-reading

Humans can experience many different mental states (the object level), and also have the ability to reflect upon these mental states (the meta-level). We could, for example, find ourselves in a state of melancholy and decide to reflect upon its depth, cause, consequences and so on. Furthermore, we know that other individuals have mental states, and by the use of different methods we draw conclusions about these mental states. That is, we perform acts of mind-reading (mentalizing). To try to read another person's mind is a second-order activity; it is thinking about minds. So how do we mind-read others? To what extent can we trust the accuracy of our mind-reading attempts? How is the mind-reading capacity acquired? Exhaustive answers to these questions are sought by philosophers, psychologists

and neuroscientists. Obviously, it is beyond the scope of the present paper to enter these debates (but see Goldman, 2006; Malle & Hodges, 2005; and Nichols & Stich, 2003).

For the present context we suggest this use of the term mind-reading: 'The cornerstone of simulating the mind of another person is that one imagines oneself being in the other person's situation, which hopefully will trigger off-line processes that are similar to those of the other' (Perner & Kuhberger, 2005, p. 179). We view mind-reading as a day-to-day activity, rather than one reserved for magicians and wizards. Importantly, and in line with, for example, Perner and Kuhberger (2005), we define the goal of mind-reading as improving the ability to predict other people's behaviour. We will not be concerned with mind-reading in a paranormal (or simple-trick) fashion, that deals with trying to read the actual content of a persons mind (e.g. 'The number you are thinking of is four'). Instead, we are interested in what can be seen as a form of instrumental mind-reading; the goal is not to describe the contents of the mind, but to make predictions about forthcoming behaviour. Mind-reading can occur in two different ways (Malle, 2005). First, a social observer can use behavioural cues to draw inferences about mental states (e.g. 'His face revealed that he was sad'). Second, a social observer can also use his or her understanding of mental states to draw inferences about behaviour ('I guess you need to rest after a day like this'). In a situation where the social observer faces the task of assessing veracity, we can expect the first of these processes to play a significant role. During an investigative interview, the demeanour of a suspect will give rise to inferences of innocence and guilt. However, whether these inferences are correct or not will be a product of the validity of the decision making of the observer. Judging from research on deception detection, people do not seem to use valid decision-making criteria when attempting to detect deception. In this paper, we argue that research on basic human behaviour and reasoning can have an important role to play in identifying ways to correctly detect deception. The major goal is to provide a theoretical framework which can be used in order to mind-read suspects' strategies, which, in turn, can be used in order to predict their future behaviour. Ultimately, this framework can help investigators to plan and conduct investigative interviews in a strategic manner.

So, what exactly is the role of mind-reading in the investigative interview context? On the most basic level, the investigator should try to mind-read the strategies and behaviour of the suspect. We will describe (a) why it makes sense to assume that guilty and innocent suspects' strategies might differ under certain circumstances, (b) how their strategies are likely to differ, and (c) how these differences can be strategically exploited during an interview to facilitate deception detection.

We propose the notion that mind-reading in police interviews might need to be guided by empirical evidence. The findings on deception detection suggest that police officers frequently make mistakes when attempting to mind-read. For example, they have been shown to believe that guilty suspects are more likely than innocent ones to experience nervousness (Strömwall et al., 2004), and consequently use nervousness as cues to deceit. In general, there are a few possible explanations why police officers' naive mind-reading might be inaccurate.

First and foremost, there are reasons to believe that many interviewers are too occupied thinking about their own strategies and tactics, and therefore neglect the suspects' strategies (Hartwig, Granhag, & Vrij, 2005). Remember Dupin criticizing the Parisian police for being too occupied with '... their own ideas of ingenuity'.

False consensus

Furthermore, the interviewer might assume that the suspect has the same mental states (and strategies) as he would have had, had he been in the same situation, 'If I was a suspect and faced with all this evidence, I would surely break'. Remember Dupin's critique that the reasoning of the Parisian police only adverted to 'the modes in which they would have hidden [the letter]'.

Stereotyping

The interviewer might assume that the suspect has mental states that correspond to 'the typical criminal'; 'This guy has a typical "criminal mind", people like him can only be broken by...'. An interviewer biased by stereotyping might come to adopt a confession-oriented approach to the interview, by for example using different 'minimizing' or 'maximizing' tactics in order to get a confession (Gudjonsson, 2003, Inbau, Reid, Buckley & Jayne, 2001).

The curse of knowledge

Psychological research shows that people have a strong tendency to assume that others hold the very same knowledge as they do; the so-called *curse of knowledge* (Birch & Bloom, 2004). As a result of an ongoing investigation, an interviewer has certain knowledge about the crime. Due to the *curse of knowledge* there is a risk that the interviewer overestimates how much the suspect knows (about what he or she knows). Consequently, the interviewer might reveal too much of what he or she knows.

To reiterate, it may be that many interviewers do not even try to mind-read the suspects at their hands, and those who try are exposed to biases that might lead them astray. Next, we will outline how psychological theory can be of assistance during mind-reading.

The psychology of self-regulation

Self-regulation refers to the ways in which people control their behaviour (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). People formulate goals, use planning and self-regulatory strategies in order to reach these goals, and monitor whether the goals are achieved. Much self-regulation occurs automatically without awareness or conscious thought (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999), but some situations demand conscious and active intervention to control behaviour. In the present context we will focus on conscious control of behaviour. Psychological research shows that self-regulatory strategies are evoked by threatening situations, and especially so if one lacks knowledge about the forthcoming aversive event. Translated into an investigative context, it is reasonable to assume that suspects will view an upcoming interview as a threat. Importantly, not knowing what and how much the interviewer knows may add to the threat. A person anticipating a threat will, under normal circumstances, have a number of self-regulation methods to choose from (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). The common objective of these methods is to try to restore control. Broadly speaking, the different methods to restore control can be reduced to two basic categories: (1) behavioural methods and (2) cognitive methods. An example of a behavioural method is to try to physically avoid the aversive event all in all, and an example of a cognitive method is to focus one's attention on non-noxious aspects of the aversive event. On a general level, a suspect awaiting an interview can use both behavioural and cognitive control methods. For

example, he could decide that he will be silent during the interview (behavioural control), or try to view the upcoming interview as a welcome break from isolation (cognitive control).

In this paper, we focus on cognitive control. The literature on social cognition suggests that there are several different types of cognitive control (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). With respect to suspects in criminal cases we believe that two such types are of particular relevance: information control and decision control. *Information control* refers to the sense of control achieved when one obtains information about the forthcoming aversive event (Johnson, 1984). *Decision control* refers to the sense of control achieved when one makes a decision with respect to how to engage in the forthcoming aversive event (Averill, 1973).

The psychology of guilt and innocence: Theoretical underpinnings

At a very basic level, it can be assumed that both guilty and innocent suspects are similar in the sense that they view the upcoming interview as threatening, and the risk of being judged as guilty as stressful. It is however possible to identify one way in which innocent and guilty suspects differ: In their relation to the crime-relevant information (e.g. how the crime was carried out, what weapons were used, where these were left). A guilty suspect will often have exclusive knowledge about the crime, knowledge which an innocent suspect lacks. Importantly, if a guilty suspect's crime-relevant knowledge becomes known to the interviewer, this would make it obvious that he is indeed the perpetrator. Hence, it makes sense for the guilty suspect to view his self-incriminating knowledge as an aversive stimulus. Obviously, the threat is not the self-incriminating knowledge as such, but that interviewer may come to know what he (the guilty suspect) knows. In sharp contrast, an innocent suspect is plagued by *the very opposite* problem: That the interviewer may *not* come to know what he (the innocent suspect) knows. In sum, both guilty and innocent suspects may perceive the upcoming interview as a threat, and can therefore be assumed to engage in self-regulatory activity. As we will discuss below, these activities might differ between guilty and innocent suspects.

Information control

Translated to crime suspects, information control aims at reducing threat by trying to predict what will happen during the interview. It makes sense to assume that both guilty and innocent suspect will evoke this type of self-regulatory control. It is moreover reasonable to assume that guilty (vs innocent) suspects will spend more time trying to predict what kind of incriminating information (evidence) he might be faced with, and asked to explain, during the interview. Note that a guilty suspect might overestimate how much crime-relevant knowledge the investigator holds due to the curse of knowledge (Birch & Bloom, 2004).

Decision control

Translated to crime suspects, decision control aims at reducing threat by deciding on how to act during the upcoming interview. We will first focus on decision control with respect to guilty suspects, and then discuss some theoretical notions pertaining to innocent suspects' decisions control.

In essence, guilty suspects will decide upon what to avoid, deny and admit during the interview. These decisions might, at least to some extent, be guided by the outcome of their

'information control activities' (e.g. it makes little sense for a suspect to avoid or deny what he believes the interviewer to already know). However, for the current context, the most critical pieces of incriminating information are those which the suspect is uncertain whether or not the interviewer holds. It makes sense to construe these pieces of information as an aversive stimulus, which leaves the suspect with two ways of acting (apart from confessing) during the interview. He could either go for avoidance (e.g. when asked to freely tell his story, avoid mentioning that he visited a certain place at a certain time), or for the denial (e.g. in response to a direct question, denying that he was at a certain place at a certain time). That guilty suspects often will invent an alibi instead of just avoiding the truth is of little relevance to the current discussion. The essential factor is that guilty suspects will hold self-incriminating knowledge which can be construed as aversive stimuli.

Interestingly, guilty suspects' avoidance and denial behaviour – which might be a result of their decision control – connects to psychological theory on some very basic forms of human behaviour. Specifically, research on so-called *aversive conditioning*, and especially the concepts of *avoidance* and *escape* (Carlson, Buskist, & Martin, 2000) might apply. Acting in a way that prevents a confrontation with a threatening stimulus is an *avoidance response*. That is, one learns a response to avoid an aversive stimulus. In contrast, acting in a way that terminates a direct threat is an *escape response*. That is, one learns a response to terminate an aversive stimulus.

Turning to innocent suspects, we can increase our understanding of their decision control by drawing on some general concepts on human reasoning (Hartwig, 2005). First, innocent suspects' mindset may be coloured by the *belief in a just world* (Lerner, 1980). In brief, this refers to the finding that people generally believe that one gets what one deserve. Accordingly, one can expect innocent people to expect to be believed, since being incorrectly judged as a liar would clash with the belief in a just world. Second, the so-called *illusion of transparency* may cause innocent suspects to believe that their inner feelings and states will manifest themselves on the outside (Savitsky & Gilovich, 2003), and that their innocence thus shows. Research has shown that people hold this belief with unwarranted confidence in a number of situations (Gilovich, Savitsky, & Medvec, 1998; Vorauer & Clade, 1998).

As beliefs guide actions, it might very well be that innocent suspects (at least initially) feel less need than a guilty person to take action in order to convince the interviewer of their innocence. They might simply trust that 'their innocence will shine through'. Kassin and Norwick (2004) recently reported results that lend support to this line of reasoning. They found that innocent (vs guilty) suspects were more prone to waive their rights to silence and agree to be interrogated. Innocent suspects' actions were accompanied by the argument that they had nothing to hide because of their innocence, and that they believed that the truth would come out (for more, see Kassin, 2005). In sum, guilty and innocent suspects have the same goal (to be perceived as innocent), and can be assumed to use the same major self-regulatory method in order to reach this goal (decision control). However, the factors influencing a suspects' decision control could be contingent on whether the suspect is guilty or innocent. Guilty suspects' decision control is assumed to be influenced by aversion, which will result in avoidant strategies. In contrast, innocent suspects' decision control is assumed to be influenced by the belief in a just world and/or the illusion of transparency, which will result in more forthcoming strategies.

The psychology of guilt and innocence: From general theory to specific predictions

We need to translate the theoretical notions on the psychology of guilt and innocence into predictions relevant for an investigative interview. Our translation results in that we can make five different predictions – three for guilty suspects and two for innocent suspects.

Based on theory on cognitive self-regulatory actions (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), we can make three predictions: A guilty suspect will often have a plan or a strategy before entering an investigative interview (Prediction 1). A guilty suspect will, if given the opportunity, try to *avoid* mentioning information that might be incriminating (Prediction 2). That is, he will avoid sharing certain parts of his knowledge about the crime. A guilty suspect, deprived of the avoidance alternative, will *deny* (Prediction 3). That is, faced with a direct question, he will deny holding, or outright contradict, the potentially incriminating knowledge.

Furthermore, based on general concepts of human cognition such as the *belief in a just world* (Lerner, 1980) and the *illusion of transparency* (Savitsky & Gilovich, 2003), we can make the following two predictions: An innocent suspect will much more rarely have a plan or a strategy before entering an investigative interview (Prediction 4). An innocent suspect will neither avoid nor escape, but ‘tell the truth it like it happened’ (Prediction 5) due to the perceived visibility of innocence (Kassin, 2005).

The psychology of guilt and innocence: From predictions to empirical tests

Suspects’ strategies is indeed an understudied issue (Granhag & Strömwall, 2004b; Granhag & Vrij, 2005). The empirical findings reviewed below stem from a series of studies conducted in our own lab, and the results must thus be treated with caution until replicated by others.

Turning first to guilty suspects, Hartwig, Granhag, and Strömwall (2007) found that a majority of guilty mock suspects reported to have a strategy when facing a police interview (this supports Prediction 1). A less direct support of the same prediction is that inmates (among other groups) believe that planning the verbal behaviour is beneficial when one wants to be successful at lying (Granhag, Andersson, Strömwall, & Hartwig, 2004). In support of Prediction 2, three recent empirical studies show that guilty mock suspects – if given the opportunity – tend to avoid mentioning incriminating information during an interview (Hartwig, Granhag, Strömwall, & Vrij, 2005; Hartwig, Granhag, Strömwall, & Kronkvist, 2006; Strömwall, Granhag et al., 2006). Furthermore, the same three studies lend support to Prediction 3, by showing that guilty suspects – deprived of avoidance as a way out – tend to escape their predicament by denying that they hold the incriminating knowledge.

Turning to innocent suspects, Hartwig et al. (2007) showed that significantly fewer innocent (than guilty) mock suspects reported having a strategy prepared for the interview (in support of Prediction 4). The research also showed support for Prediction 5 by revealing that very few innocent mock suspects tend to avoid mentioning or deny holding the potentially incriminating information when being interviewed (Hartwig et al., 2006; Strömwall, Granhag et al., 2006). Instead, the principal strategy among the innocent suspects seems to be to ‘to keep the story real’ (Strömwall, Hartwig, & Granhag, 2006) and ‘to tell the truth like it happened’ (Hartwig et al., 2007). The most comprehensive meta-analysis to date on cues to deception lends general support to these results by showing that truth tellers were perceived as markedly more cooperative and forthcoming than liars (DePaulo et al., 2003).

In sum, the combined empirical evidence support the basic assumptions that (a) a suspect's strategy is a reflection of his or her mental state; and (b) a suspect's behaviour is a reflection of his or her strategy. Specifically, by construing the 'incriminating knowledge' as an aversive stimulus, we are able to advance our understanding of the strategies employed by guilty suspects. By invoking basic concepts on human reasoning, we are able to advance our understanding of the strategies employed by innocent suspects.

The psychology of guilt and innocence: From empirical tests to interview tactics

How do the above findings translate into an interview technique which could be empirically tested? In a still ongoing research programme, we have outlined and tested a technique called *The Strategic Use of Evidence* technique (the SUE technique) (for an overview of this research programme see Hartwig, 2005; Granhag, Strömwall, & Hartwig, 2007 and Granhag & Strömwall, 2008). For the present context, it suffices to say that the main components of this technique, as it has been outlined so far are the following: First, the interviewer needs to withhold the incriminating information from the suspects. Second, the interviewer needs to ask for a free recall. Third, the interviewer needs to ask the suspect a number of specific question, that concern the incriminating evidence without disclosing it. An example of such a question would be whether the suspect saw and touched an item (from which his fingerprints has been found).

Below we will present a summary of a training study (Hartwig et al., 2006). In the study, innocent and guilty suspects of a mock theft were interviewed by police trainees ($n = 82$), half of which received training in the SUE technique, including both a theoretical and a practical part. The theoretical part contained information on the psychology of guilt and innocence and suspects' strategies stemming from empirical studies. In the practical part the trainees were trained in identifying potentially incriminating information from case files, and in planning and asking questions about the evidence without disclosing it to the suspect. The trained and untrained interviewers were given a case-file containing three pieces of incriminating information (evidence) against the suspect: (1) one witness reported having seen the witness in the store where the theft occurred, (2) another witness claimed to have seen the suspect in the part of the store where theft occurred, and (3) the suspect's fingerprints had been found on the briefcase from which theft occurred. Importantly, this evidence was 'true' for all suspects: both guilty and innocent suspects were at the crime scene, and the innocent suspects touched the briefcase as part of a non-criminal act.

Results showed that those who had received training (vs those who did not and were merely instructed to interview in the manner of their own choice) interviewed more in line with the SUE technique. That is, they did not disclose evidence, and they asked for a free recall and a number of specific questions. Guilty suspects avoided mentioning incriminating information during the free recall (whereas innocent suspects showed much less avoidance). We also found that guilty suspects to a great extent denied holding incriminating information when asked specific questions about the information.

In all, guilty suspects interviewed by trained interviewers showed more statement-evidence inconsistency than did guilty suspects interviewed by untrained interrogators. Simply put, what guilty suspects said was contradicted by the evidence, when the trained interviewers applied the SUE technique. We found that trained interviewer relied on such contradictions, or lack of consistency when assessing veracity. In brief, the trained interviewers created and used a diagnostic cue to deception: statement-evidence inconsistency (whereas the untrained failed to do so). The overall accuracy was 85.4% for trained interviewers, which is one of the highest hit rates in the literature, whereas the

untrained interviewers achieved in line with chance (56.1%) and with most other groups tested (Bond & DePaulo, 2006).

Interestingly, guilty suspects interviewed according to the SUE technique reported experiencing more cognitive demand during the interview than did innocent suspects interviewed according to the same technique. Importantly, this finding fits well with the cognitive-load approach to deception detection (see Vrij, Fisher, Mann, & Leal, 2006), and the findings that deceiving is associated with increased activity in higher brain centres (see Spence et al., 2006).

A note on applications and limitations

We have outlined some theoretical underpinnings of the SUE technique. We will now briefly address some issues pertaining to the application and limitations of the technique.

In terms of application, we believe that the use of the SUE technique transfers beyond the type of crime used in the training study reviewed above (i.e. a theft). One reason for this generalizability is that we used other crimes such as fraud, murder and arson in the training session preceding the actual test. It is also important to note that the SUE technique is not restricted to situations where the interrogator's total knowledge about the crime exceeds that of the suspect. Instead, the use of the SUE technique only requires that the suspect is *uncertain* about what the interrogator knows (a very common situation in investigative settings). Hence, there is reason to believe that the application of the SUE technique is wide. The SUE technique could very well be taught without any reference to instrumental mind-reading (e.g. the term was not introduced to the police trainees in the reviewed training study). One could learn, and probably relatively successfully practice, the major principles of the SUE technique without knowing exactly why these principles work, in the same manner as a sales person can use a successful trick without knowing or caring about its psychological basis. However, it is plausible that having knowledge about the psychological basis of the SUE technique will allow for a more flexible use of the technique.

There is need for a cautious note. Obviously, the SUE technique leaves no guarantee that a particular assessment of veracity will be correct. The technique is very much a project in progress and most factors that might influence the effectiveness of the technique remain to be empirically addressed. For example, we need to learn more about the extent to which innocent suspects might show statement–evidence inconsistency due to memory factors or due to that they, for one or the other reason, decide that the best way out is not to tell the whole truth. Also, an innocent suspect faced with an aggressive and/or manipulative interviewer, might very quickly change his or her ‘no-problem-the-truth-will-come-out’ attitude, into a state of helplessness, frustration or anger. Future research should address how such shifts in attitude might alter innocent suspects’ self-regulatory strategies. Furthermore, we need to find out more about the extent to which guilty suspects might show high statement–evidence consistency as a result of staying as close as possible to the truth. We also need to study how the complexity of the case material (the evidence) affects the effectiveness of the SUE technique.

Coda

Our major aim was to introduce notions from the psychology of mind-reading, the psychology of self-regulation and the psychology of guilt and innocence, and to show how

these notions can be combined into a theoretical framework. In the following section we will summarize how our thoughts on these notions connect.

The point of departure is that we need to decide whether a particular suspect is lying or telling the truth. Facing such a task it would, of course, be very helpful if we could actually read the suspect's mind. We do not have direct access to the content of the suspect's mind; however we do have access to the suspect's behaviour. We have argued that instrumental mind-reading can be used in order to learn about suspects' strategies, and thereby increase the chances of accurately predicting guilty and innocent suspects' behaviour. These predictions are of utmost importance for planning and conducting investigative interviews. In order to conduct a proper mind-reading, though, we need to consult psychological research – naive mind-reading seems to be too flawed. In traditional deception detection research, there is a strong emphasis on the mind-reading process of observing behaviour in order to make inferences about mental states. Specifically, in the majority of the studies conducted on people's ability to detect deception, the participants view suspects on video, and use the suspects' behaviour in order to infer whether they are lying or telling the truth. In such situations, lie catchers are merely passive observers who, in the process of detecting deception, are left with their (stereotypical) beliefs about cues to deception. The approach outlined in the present paper is fundamentally different. It suggests that a mind-reading of suspects' strategies should be used in order to predict behaviour, and – importantly – that these predictions should be used to plan and conduct the interview. That is, the current line of research deals with active interviewers who, in the process of detecting deception, are assisted by well-established psychological theory. For more on belief- vs knowledge-driven processes as means for detecting deception, see Granhag & Strömwall (2004a).

One could perhaps argue that all this is much fuss about something rather trivial and intuitive, that most police investigators would already understand and apply. However, our hindsight is frequently tainted by biases, and we need to consider the following: First, the untrained police trainees in the training study – although highly motivated to succeed in the task – did not use something even similar to the SUE technique (Hartwig et al., 2006). Second, a study by Hartwig and colleagues (2004) showed that not even experienced police officers seem to handle the potentially incriminating information strategically, and that the number of interviewing styles found were about as many as there were officers in the study. Third, many police interrogation manuals recommend that the suspect is confronted with the evidence, sometimes at the beginning of the interrogation (see Hartwig, 2005). Fourth, studying other domains within investigative psychology, we learn that mind-reading is considered an important, but seldom seen, skill. For example, Canter (2003) speculates that a detective's success in profiling criminals '... depends on how well he shapes his mental map and his hunting strategy to match that of his prey ...' (p. 15).

Finally, as the Minister in Poe's novel knew that the police would search his home for the purloined letter, he decided not to hide it. He simply nailed it to a board on the wall, holding some other papers. The letter was fully visible – but not easily found by those searching for something hidden.

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