

Generalized Communicative Suspicion (GCS) Among Police Officers: Accounting for the Investigator Bias Effect¹

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Research shows that police officers are no more accurate than non-officers in discerning between truthful and deceptive statements, but more biased than non-officers to judge statements as deceptive. This was labeled by Meissner and Kassin (2002) as the *investigator bias effect*. A likely explanation could be that, since officers are normally involved in situations where questioning the truthfulness of the interviewee is essential, they could develop a generalized communicative suspicion (GCS). Levine and McCormack's (1991) GCS scale was adapted to the Spanish context and used to compare the GCS ratings of 152 undergraduates, 88 experienced officers, and 89 police recruits. Experienced officers' GCS scores were significantly higher than those of the other groups, which did not differ from each other. This suggests that socialization within the police force increases the officers' suspicion, leading them to make deceptiveness judgments.

There is no doubt about the importance of interviewing for police officers (e.g., Bull, 1999; Gudjonsson, 1992; Milne & Bull, 1999; Vrij, 1998a). Although scientific analysis and sleuthing are crucial elements of a police investigation, often they are not used until the police have identified a suspect by means of an interview. Furthermore, in many cases, physical evidence is lacking (e.g., child sexual abuse allegations; Lamb, 1994; Raskin & Steller, 1989; Undeutsch, 1989). Often, information concerning someone's feelings, thoughts, and intentions at the time of the offense must be gathered by the police (Gudjonsson, 1992). The only

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way of collecting this information is by means of an interview. All of these factors make the interview an important tool for the police, at least during the early stages of an investigation.

However, a police interview is a kind of situation that may make some people lie. With regard to the guilty person, lying is often considered a good strategy for avoiding negative consequences, such as being severely punished (e.g., Saarni & Lewis, 1993). But the witnesses and victims may resort to lying as well, owing to reasons such as protecting someone else, feeling ashamed of what happened, and so forth. Therefore, as Robinson (1978, cited in Bull, 1989) indicated, the police spend a substantial portion of time assessing whether or not interviewees are lying. This has led some authors to stress the importance of the detection of deceit within police work (e.g., Bull, 1989; Garrido & Masip, 1999; Kalbfleisch, 1994; Vrij, 1998b, 2000).

An important aspect of police officers' detection of deception has been pointed out by Kassin and his collaborators (Kassin, 2002; Kassin & Fong, 1999; Meissner & Kassin, 2002). They observed that many law-enforcement professionals strongly believe that they are capable of discerning whether someone is lying or telling the truth during a preinterrogation interview. If these professionals are convinced that the suspect is lying, then they may use powerful interrogation techniques to obtain a confession from the suspect. However, techniques of this kind are troublesome since they can lead even innocent suspects to confess (see reviews by Conti, 1999; Gudjonsson, 1992, 1999; Gudjonsson & MacKeith, 1982; Kassin, 1997; McCann, 1998; Vrij, 1998a). Therefore, if police officers' lie-detection skills are limited, innocent people could be accused, brought to court, and, in view of the influence that confession evidence has on juries' verdicts (e.g., Kassin & Neumann, 1997; Kassin & Sukel, 1997), wrongly convicted. Therefore, law-enforcement professionals' lie-detection accuracy and their decision-making strategies when judging credibility deserve scientific scrutiny.

A number of researchers have undertaken this task (e.g., Akehurst, Köhnken, Vrij, & Bull, 1996; Akehurst & Vrij, 1999; DePaulo & Pfeiffer, 1986; Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991; Ekman, O'Sullivan, & Frank, 1999; Garrido & Masip, 2001; Garrido, Masip, & Herrero, 2004; Garrido, Masip, Herrero, & Rojas, 2000; Kalbfleisch, 1994; Kassin, 2002; Köhnken, 1987; Kraut & Poe, 1980; Masip, Garrido, & Rojas-Díaz, 2000; Meissner & Kassin, 2002; Porter, Woodworth, & Birt, 2000; Taylor & Vrij, 2000; Vrij, 1992, 1994, 2000; Vrij & Graham, 1997; Vrij & Mann, 2001a, 2001b; Vrij & Semin, 1996). In most studies, videotaped truthful or deceptive statements have been shown to police observers who had to judge the credibility of each statement. In some experiments, observers also had to indicate their judgmental confidence or their general perceived lie-detection ability, as well as the cues they used in making their judgments. Other studies were actually surveys asking officers to indicate what cues they think are reliable deception indicators (e.g., Akehurst et al., 1996; Taylor & Vrij, 2000; Vrij & Semin, 1996).

An early review of part of this literature (Garrido & Masip, 1999) concluded that although police personnel's daily involvement in deception-relevant situations may lead laypeople to assume that officers are very proficient lie- and truth-detectors, actually the following is the case: (a) police officers' detection accuracy in making veracity judgments does not exceed that of non-officers; (b) experienced officers are no more accurate than are new recruits; (c) rarely do officers' accuracy rates significantly exceed the chance level; (d) there is no relationship between real accuracy and respondents' confidence in their performance or their general perceived ability to detect deception; (e) police officers, especially the most experienced, tend to overestimate their general lie- and truth-detection skills and confidence in their judgments; (f) the behavioral cues officers say they use to discern truth from deception (i.e., their beliefs about the indicators of deception) are actually useless; (g) experienced officers' beliefs about the cues to deceit do not differ from those of new recruits; (h) there is no difference between the cues officers and laypeople say they use to judge credibility; and (i) not only do police officers hold wrong beliefs about the indicators of deception, but they also base their judgments on irrelevant behavioral cues. Other recent studies not included in Garrido and Masip's review support their conclusions in general (e.g., Akehurst & Vrij, 1999; Ekman et al., 1999; Kassin, 2002; Meissner & Kassin, 1999; Porter et al., 2000; Taylor & Vrij, 2000), even when real-life high-stakes lies were used as stimuli (e.g., Vrij & Mann, 2001a, 2001b).

An interesting result of deception-detection research is what Meissner and Kassin (1999) termed the *investigator bias effect*. In general, behavioral familiarity, which is the "knowledge about prototypical deception cues gained through training or experience" (Buller & Burgoon, 1996, p. 214), does not lead to better performance (i.e., an increased ability to identify both truthful and deceptive communications) but, rather, to an increase in the number of judgments of deceptiveness. This favors lie-detection ability, but decreases accuracy in detecting truthful accounts. Thus, for instance, in an early study, Sanderson (1978, as cited by Bull, 1989) found that experienced and novice officers did not differ in accuracy, and that police officers were more accurate than non-officers in judging deceptive statements, but not in judging truthful ones. Neither group outperformed the others in terms of overall judgmental accuracy (i.e., accuracy in judging both truths and lies).

Burgoon, Buller, Ebesu, and Rockwell (1994) reported that U.S. military experts judged interviewees' answers as less truthful than did non-experts. In addition, experts were more biased and less accurate than were lay participants in judging the truthful statements, but less biased and more accurate in judging the deceptive ones. Overall accuracy was poorer among the expert observers than among the naïve ones. Ekman et al. (1999) found that some professionals who should be capable of discerning whether someone is lying or telling the truth (U.S. federal officers, sheriffs, clinical psychologists) reached higher accuracy

rates when judging lies than when judging truthful statements. Porter et al. (2000), who trained Canadian parole officers and undergraduates to detect deception, revealed that although training increased performance at detecting both truthful and deceptive statements, both training and being a parole officer resulted in higher accuracy in judging deceptive statements, while the officers did not stand out when judging the truthful ones. With regard to overall baseline accuracy, the officers performed significantly below chance and were significantly less accurate than a lay-observer group and marginally less accurate than another one.

Meissner and Kassin (2002) reported that police investigators generated significantly more false alarms (incorrect identifications of truthful statements as deceptive) than did naïve students. Further analyses revealed that the officers had a more liberal response bias (i.e., higher likelihood of judging the statements as deceptive) than did the combined sample of naïve and trained students. There were no significant differences between the three groups in overall accuracy.

Finally, Garrido et al. (2004; see also preliminary results in Garrido et al., 2000) found that Spanish police officers had a very strong tendency to judge the statements as deceptive. This made them less accurate than the undergraduate sample in judging the truthful accounts, while both groups reached a similar accuracy level when judging the deceptive ones. No significant overall differences in accuracy emerged between the groups.

Although other studies have been conducted in which this lie bias has not been found among officers (e.g., Köhnken, 1987; Vrij, 1992; Vrij & Mann, 2001a), Meissner and Kassin (2002) used meta-analytical procedures to reanalyze the existing behavioral-familiarity research (involving professional expertise, training, or both). Included in their analyses were those published experiments that had used a control group in addition to the expert or training group(s) and that reported lie- and truth-detection accuracy separately. Meissner and Kassin found that, across studies, both professional experience and training engendered a lie bias. However, experience and training did not significantly increase observers' discrimination accuracy (i.e., the overall correct classification of both truthful and deceptive statements).

Once this has been well established, a necessary further step is to examine the decision-making strategies that officers use when making their credibility judgments, as well as to identify the precise nature and source of their biases. In addition to asking their respondents to make credibility judgments, Garrido et al. (2004) asked them to report the cues they used to make those judgments. They found that police officers primarily mentioned cues associated with judgments of deceptiveness and interpreted ambiguous behavior as lie indicators. Conversely, non-officers mentioned comparatively more cues associated with judgments of truthfulness and interpreted ambiguous behavior as truthfulness indicators (Masip et al., 2000; see also Garrido et al., 2000).

In order to account for this bias, we shall first refer to Levine and McCormack's (1991; see also McCormack & Levine, 1990) distinction between two kinds of suspicion that may affect observers' judgments of credibility: situationally aroused or *state* suspicion and generalized communicative suspicion (GCS). They define the former as "a belief that communication within a specific setting and at a particular time may be deceptive" (Levine & McCormack, 1991, p. 328). It has, therefore, a contextual nature, depending on the specific features of the credibility-assessment situation. For instance, telling observers who had to assess the truthfulness of a series of videotaped statements that some of the participants making these statements had been instructed to lie (e.g., Stiff, Kim, & Ramesh, 1992; Toris & DePaulo, 1984) would generate state suspicion in those observers. Research has shown that an increase in state suspicion results in an increase in the proportion of judgments of deceptiveness (McCormack & Levine, 1990; Millar & Millar, 1997; Stiff et al., 1992; Toris & DePaulo, 1984).

On the other hand, Levine and McCormack (1991) define GCS as "a predisposition toward believing that the messages produced by others are deceptive" (p. 328), therefore being relatively enduring and cross-situational. Levine and McCormack pointed out that GCS consists of a system of related beliefs that can be considered a cognitive construct. Existing research shows that the higher the observers' GCS ratings, the higher their proportion of judgments of deceptiveness (Levine & McCormack, 1991; McCormack & Levine, 1990).

It is unquestionable that police officers regularly participate in what Robinson (1996) termed *competitive interactions*. Unlike *cooperative interactions*, wherein all the participants pursue identical objectives that will favor them all, competitive interactions are characterized by each individual participant seeking his or her own benefit, often to the detriment of the other participants' interests.

A clear *competitive interaction* would be, by definition, the typical state-suspicion-arousing situation since the participants, knowledgeable about the nature of the interaction, would be concerned about being misled by the others. From an officer's viewpoint, a police interview is often a competitive interaction. The interviewer often distrusts and questions what the interviewee says, and this is adaptive in a certain way since police officers must not believe everything the interviewees say. After all, some of them indeed have very compelling reasons to lie. However, officers' repeated exposure to situations of this kind could result in the state suspicion that characterizes them becoming chronic over time, so that police officers end up believing that other people normally lie; that is, developing a GCS.

If police officers then enter the credibility-assessment situation with the prior belief that the witness is going to lie (high GCS), it is possible that when making their judgments they do not attend to or process the verbal and nonverbal information conveyed by the sender. Instead, guided by their high GCS, officers may resolve directly that the witness is lying. However, in the studies by Garrido et al. (2004) and Masip et al. (2000), it was found that police officers did not make

their judgments earlier than did the non-officer control group (Masip, Garrido, & Herrero, 2003) and that the overall number of verbal and nonverbal indicators mentioned by the officers was not smaller than the number of indicators mentioned by the students (Masip et al., 2000). An alternative possibility is that officers indeed will heed and process the information conveyed by the sender, but not in an objective way to ascertain whether he or she is lying or telling the truth, but in a biased manner to confirm that he or she is definitely lying. This would result in the findings reported by Masip et al. (2000). It was apparent that officers overlooked truthfulness cues, searched for deceptiveness cues, and interpreted ambiguous indicators as cues to deceit. This could be indicative of a confirmatory strategy among police officers, based on their initial suspicion that the witness is lying (high GCS).

The purpose of the present study, therefore, is to explore whether police personnel actually have a higher GCS than do non-officers, and to examine whether their on-the-job experience within the police force can account for that heightened GCS. High GCS ratings among police officers could explain why they strongly tend to report indicators associated with judgments of deceptiveness and to make judgments of this kind primarily.

The hypothesis is posed that the most experienced police officers—those who have undergone a longer socialization process within the force—will have the highest GCS. In order to test this hypothesis, observers' groups with varying job experience within the police force were administered Levine and McCornack's (1991) GCS scale. This scale consists of a series of 14 Likert-type items. Each item is a short statement, and respondents indicate their degree of agreement with each statement on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The statements are as follows:

1. Everyone lies; the person who says that they don't is the biggest liar of all.
2. I often feel as if people aren't being completely truthful with me.
3. Most people only tell you what they think you want to hear.
4. When I am in a conversation with someone, I frequently wonder whether they are really telling me the truth.
5. People rarely tell you what they're really thinking.
6. The best policy is to trust people until proven wrong.
7. Dishonesty is a part of human nature.
8. When I first meet someone, I assume that they are probably lying to me about some things.
9. Most people are basically honest.
10. Anyone who completely trusts someone else is asking for trouble.
11. When I ask a stranger for directions, I frequently wonder whether they are being truthful.

12. When I am talking to others, I tend to believe what they say.
13. People seldom lie to me.
14. Most people follow the saying "honesty is the best policy."

Notice that Items 6, 9, 12, 13, and 14 are reverse scored.

It is important to stress that in their validation studies, Levine and McCormack (1991) tried to create a unidimensional scale. They used the following item-retention criteria: factor loadings of at least .40, a positive contribution to the reliability of the scale, and item consistency with a unidimensional factor model. On the basis of these criteria, they had to delete six items in one of their studies, while only three were deleted in the other study in which the structure of the instrument was examined. Of course, before using Levine and McCormack's GCS scale with our samples, we translated the scale into Spanish, and then analyzed its factor structure and reliability. Like the original authors, we also intended to obtain a unidimensional instrument.

Method

Participants

Three samples participated in this study: a non-officers group of 152 undergraduate students of psychology at a Spanish university (non-officers control group), and two police samples. The latter were taken from the same pool as Garrido et al.'s (2000, 2004) and Masip et al.'s (2000, 2003) officers. They were second-year executive-level students at the Spanish Police Academy in Ávila. Half of them ($n = 89$) were novice officers, since they had entered the police force less than 2 years before the data were collected. The rest of them ($n = 88$) were experienced: They had gained access to the executive level through internal promotion; their average on-the-job experience was 18.10 years.³

While most of the undergraduates were female (129 in comparison with 23 males), the majority of novice officers were male (55 in comparison with 16

³In the Spanish national police force, there are officers, subinspectors, inspectors, chief inspectors (*inspectores jefe*), superintendents (*comisarios*), and chief superintendents (*comisarios jefe*). Normally, an inspector is in charge of a group of police officers. To become an officer, it is necessary to study the basic level at the police academy. To become an inspector, it is necessary to study the executive level at the police academy. To enter the executive level, applicants (laypeople; i.e., non-officers) must be 30 years of age or younger, must have studied at the university, and must pass a competitive examination. Also, police officers with many years of on-the-job experience may apply for promotion to police inspector. If their application is successful, then they are sent to the police academy and enter the executive level. These students are normally older than the former, and have long experience as officers. Our novice "police officers" were young and inexperienced students of the executive level in their second year at the academy. The experienced ones had already spent an average of 18.10 years within the police force, and had successfully applied for promotion to police inspector, having thus been sent to the police academy.

females; 18 participants in this sample did not report their gender). All of the experienced officers who reported their gender (79 out of the 88 in the sample) were also male. These gender differences between groups were, of course significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 302) = 174.14, p = .000$. The three samples also differed significantly in age, $F(2, 328) = 8.86, p = .000$. The undergraduate group was the youngest one ($M = 22.14$ years); next was the novice officers' group ($M = 28.32$ years); and the experienced officers' group was the oldest ($M = 41.49$ years). Post hoc tests indicate that all three samples differed significantly.

Procedure

Levine and McCornack's (1991) GCS scale was translated into Spanish, printed out, and administered to the three samples of participants. The scale administration was conducted in groups, asking those subgroups of officers or undergraduates who were attending a social psychology lecture on the days the data were collected to complete the printed questionnaire. After they completed the questionnaire, participants were debriefed. However, unlike the police officers, the undergraduates had to wait a few months before the debriefing session since they first had to participate in another experiment, and the debriefing information concerning this study could bias their performance.

Results

Spanish Adaptation of Levine and McCornack's GCS Scale

Since the naïve control group was that of the undergraduate students, this was the normative reference group used to adapt the scale to Spanish participants. Like Levine and McCornack (1991), we intended to obtain a unidimensional instrument.

Principal components factor analyses were used, although we asked the program for a single-factor solution. The aim was to retain only those items with a sufficient loading. We adopted the same criterion as Levine and McCornack (1991) of retaining only those items with a factor loading of at least .40. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for all the diverse sets of items that could shape the scale, and those whose suppression would contribute to increasing its reliability were deleted.

Finally, a confirmatory factor analysis entering the items that had been retained was run on LISREL 8.5 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) using the maximum-likelihood estimation method. The ratio of chi square to number of degrees of freedom, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), the normed fit index (NFI), the comparative fit index (CFI), and the standardized root mean square residual (RMR) were used to evaluate the overall fit of

the measure model. The process of analysis and item selection, as well as the final scale, is presented in Table 1.

Initial factor analysis shows that Items 1, 6, and 11 had factor loadings lower than required. In addition, suppressing Item 1 would increase the scale reliability. We therefore proceeded to delete this item, and the analyses were conducted again with the remaining items. The factor weight of Item 6 had increased somewhat; however, its suppression would contribute slightly to the scale reliability. This item was deleted, therefore, and then Item 11 was suppressed as well since its factor loading was still lower than required and its deletion would positively affect the reliability of the scale. The resulting instrument contained 11 items with a minimum factor loading of .512. The deletion of none of these items would increase Cronbach's alpha, which reached the large .8223 value (Table 1). It is important to keep in mind that in their validation studies, Levine and McCormack (1991) found alphas of .71 (Study 1) and .75 (Study 3).

A confirmatory factor analysis performed on LISREL 8.5 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) shows a satisfactory fit to data ($\chi^2/df = 1.98$; GFI = .90; AGFI = .86; NFI = .89; CFI = .94; RMR = .065). Standardized factor loadings are presented in Table 1. All loadings had magnitudes larger than .45 (for all loadings, $p < .001$). In summary, the set of retained items appears to have good reliability and a sound unidimensional structure. Therefore, the scale could be used with our samples.

Effect of Police Experience on GCS Ratings

The mean score of all groups in the final GCS scale was 35.94 ($SD = 10.29$). The undergraduates had a score of 35.57 ($SD = 9.36$), the novice officers a score of 33.13 ($SD = 10.11$), and the experienced officers a score of 39.42 ($SD = 11.09$). An ANCOVA was calculated first through the general linear model module of SPSS. Respondents' sample (non-officer/novice officer/experienced officer) was entered as the only independent variable; participants' gender and age were entered as covariates, and GCS scores as the dependent measure. The analysis shows that neither of the covariates had significant effects on the GCS ratings⁴

⁴It was already indicated that the participants' samples differed significantly in both gender and age. These demographic differences were inevitable, in part because of the selection criteria for police officers, and the only available option was statistically controlling for them. In addition to entering gender and age as covariates in the ANCOVA, further analyses were done to examine their impact. These analyses revealed that gender and age as such did not have a direct effect on the GCS ratings. Males and females did not differ significantly in their GCS scores, neither when collapsing the data across all three samples, nor when each individual sample was examined separately. In addition, analyses to examine the correlations between respondents' age and their GCS scores conducted separately for each sample failed to reach statistical significance. These analyses are available from the primary author on request.

Table 1

Factor and Scale Reliability Analyses and Item-Deletion Process

Item	Item <i>M</i>	SD	All items		Item 1 deleted		Items 1 and 6 deleted		Items 1, 6, and 11 deleted		Standardized λ^a
			Factor loading	α if item deleted	Factor loading	α if item deleted	Factor loading	α if item deleted	Factor loading	α if item deleted	
1	4.75	1.62	.35	.8218	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
2	3.52	1.51	.68	.7990	.68	.8007	.70	.7982	.70	.7974	.67
3	3.34	1.41	.62	.8033	.62	.8056	.64	.8044	.64	.8043	.60
4	2.67	1.34	.65	.8022	.65	.8049	.67	.8028	.70	.8028	.63
5	3.15	1.56	.59	.8051	.60	.8075	.61	.8060	.61	.8065	.55
6	2.97	1.52	.40	.8188	.41	.8221	—	—	—	—	—
7	3.72	1.52	.57	.8052	.57	.8085	.58	.8086	.58	.8090	.52
8	2.98	1.13	.59	.8050	.59	.8085	.59	.8086	.58	.8104	.52
9	3.68	1.30	.60	.8048	.60	.8076	.59	.8095	.60	.8087	.54
10	3.06	1.78	.53	.8091	.53	.8129	.53	.8155	.51	.8185	.45
11	1.75	1.12	.34	.8177	.34	.8215	.34	.8223	—	—	—
12	2.40	1.00	.69	.8023	.69	.8037	.68	.8048	.68	.8049	.62
13	3.28	1.24	.51	.8113	.52	.8133	.51	.8151	.53	.8148	.47
14	3.76	1.27	.59	.8051	.58	.8085	.57	.8101	.58	.8099	.52
Cronbach's α			.8193		.8218		.8221		.8223		.8223

^aFor all loadings, $p < .001$.

(both F s < 1), while the effect of the respondents' sample was indeed significant, $F(2, 301) = 4.42, p = .013$.

A one-way ANOVA calculated without the covariates⁵ further reveals that the independent variable had a significant effect on GCS scores, $F(2, 328) = 8.86, p = .000$. Scheffé post hoc tests indicate that while the novice officers did not differ significantly from the undergraduate control group ($z = 2.44, p = .193$), the experienced officers' sample had higher GCS scores than did both the undergraduates ($z = 3.85, p = .018$) and the novice officers ($z = 6.29, p = .000$).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to establish whether experience as a police officer is associated with a heightened GCS. In order to examine this question, Levine and McCornack's (1991) GCS scale was adapted to Spanish and was administered to three samples: a non-officer sample, a sample of novice officers, and a sample of experienced officers with an average job experience of 18.10 years.

Levine and McCornack's (1991) scale had adequate qualities. The initial 14-item solution already had a good Cronbach's alpha. The deletion of those items with limited factor loadings slightly increased scale reliability. Specifically, 11 out of the 14 original items were retained, and the Cronbach's alpha of the scale was .8223. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis show a close fit between the unidimensional measure model and the data.

The scale was administered to three groups of respondents. Analyses indicate that, regardless of participants' gender and age, the groups differed in terms of their GCS. Specifically, the experienced officers achieved higher GCS scores than did the novice officers and the undergraduates. On the contrary, the latter two groups did not differ from each other.

These results indicate that it is not the case that those people who are most distrustful (i.e., high GCSs) become police officers (in which case the novice officers would attain GCS ratings similar to those of the experienced, instead of reaching scores similar to those of the undergraduate sample). Instead, becoming an officer is what seems to produce increases in GCS. However, this process seems to be gradual, owing to the officers' experience. Thus, the relevant condition is not merely being an officer: The novice officers scored lower than the experienced ones in the GCS scale. Given the climate of a total institution such as the police academy, characterized by strong pressure toward uniformity, a strong feeling of group membership among the officers, and pseudomilitary discipline, the novice officers "were" (i.e., felt they were) just as much officers as the

⁵Once it was clear that the demographic characteristics of participants did not affect the dependent variable, an ANOVA could be calculated without them. This allowed the program to include in the analysis the data of the 27 participants (18 novice officers, 9 experienced officers) excluded from the ANCOVA because of not having reported their gender.

experienced ones.⁶ The main difference between them was that the latter were more experienced than the former. Probably, it is the daily involvement of police officers in situations that create a state suspicion that, in the long run, turns the progressively more experienced officers into distrustful individuals, giving rise to a heightened GCS among them.

It could be argued, however, that the significant difference between novice and experienced officers' GCS ratings could be a result of factors other than their job experience within the force. For example, as explained in Footnote 3, the experienced officers who participated in this study had applied successfully for promotion to inspector. Some could argue that the selection process of inspectors perhaps could be biased in favor of those applicants who have high GCS. This is unlikely, however, in view of the selection criteria legally established to accept applicants as inspectors (Orden of October 24, 1989; Real Decreto 614/1995 of April 21). Length of service (total length, service length in certain police jobs and within lower police ranks) is a fundamental criterion, and criteria that might be directly related to officers' GCS (e.g., number of arrests) are not taken into account⁷ (Orden of October 24, 1989; Real Decreto 614/1995 of April 21).

The mean length of service of our police officers was 18.10 years. It could be argued that many officers may be dismissed, resign, or retire before they have served for such a long time. And those officers who remain within the force may differ in several ways from those who leave; for instance, in terms of their GCS. This is also very unlikely in view of the way the Spanish national police force works. A police officer is a civil servant. In Spain, civil servants enjoy not only the rights of any employee of any kind, but also a number of additional rights and privileges (Decreto 315/1964 of February 7; Sánchez, 1997). Because of this, many people spend a number of years preparing themselves to pass the competitive examinations for posts in the civil service, and they are very unlikely to resign once they have become civil servants. Police positions are not an exception to this general rule.

⁶On total institutions and their effects, see Goffman (1961); Newcomb (1943); or Newcomb, Koenig, Flacks, and Warwick (1967).

⁷Experienced officers within the Spanish national police force who have been subinspectors for a 3-year period can apply to become a police inspector (Footnote 3). The relevant selection criteria can be summarized as follows (for more detailed information, see Orden of October 24, 1989; Real Decreto 614/1995 of April 21; Orden of June 30, 1995; Orden of October 1, 1999): First, the mere length of service of applicants; second, a ranking based on the applicant's résumé as officers (length of service in certain police jobs, medals and rewards, and union activities), their academic degrees and other educational achievements, and their length of service within lower police ranks; finally, applicants are interviewed by a higher rank officer who assesses their knowledge of the police force, and by a psychologist who tries to detect any sign of psychopathology. In some cases, applicants also must perform written exams based on a syllabus that they must learn. It is apparent that criteria overly related with GCS are not among the selection requisites.

One of the additional rights of Spanish civil servants is the right to keep their posts until they retire (Decreto 315/1964 of February 7). That is, unless they have committed a very serious fault, they cannot be dismissed. In addition, the police disciplinary rules establish an alternative punishment for very serious faults: suspension for a 3- to 6-year period (Ley Orgánica 2/1986 of March 13; Real Decreto 884/1989 of July 14). In other words, if officers commit a very serious fault they can be dismissed but, alternatively, they can only be suspended from service for a few years, after which they re-enter the force. In addition, serious police faults have little to do with GCS. They refer to acts such as behaving in a manner contrary to the Spanish Constitution, committing malicious misdeeds, insubordination, taking drugs or alcohol on duty, and so forth (Ley Orgánica 2/1986 of March 13; Real Decreto 884/1989 of July 14).

In summary, experienced officers are not a rare subgroup of those who entered the force a number of years ago, but a very representative one, since they do not leave their jobs voluntarily and normally are not dismissed. In fact, after searching in vain for published official statistics of the number of police officers who resigned or were dismissed, we asked the Staff Division of the National Police Office of the Spanish Ministry of Internal Affairs. We were told that no statistics existed. The reason for this is that these instances (i.e., someone being dismissed or resigning) are very rare.

Finally, Spanish police officers do not normally retire voluntarily. Instead, they have the chance of going into *second activity*, a non-active service status, rather more advantageous than retirement (see Ley 26/1994 of September 29; Real Decreto 1556/1995 of September 21). Officers can go into second activity once they reach certain ages, or when their physical or psychological skills decrease to such a point that they cannot perform their duties proficiently, or if they apply for it. However, police personnel can voluntarily apply for second-activity status only after they have served for a 25-year period. The mean length of service of our experienced officers was 18 years; thus, they could not have applied for being moved to second-activity status yet.⁸

In summary, neither the selection procedures for officers who applied to be promoted to inspector, nor experienced officers' attrition over the years can account for the differences between the experienced officers' GCS ratings and those of the other experimental groups. Selection criteria do not consider applicants' GCS, and officers' attrition is virtually nonexistent. Instead, experience

⁸Ten experienced officers indicated that they had more than 25 years of job experience. Analyses conducted excluding these 10 most experienced participants yielded results that were virtually identical to those reported in the Results section. Significant differences between the three occupational samples were apparent, $F(2, 318) = 7.38, p = .001$. Scheffé tests indicate that non-officers and undergraduates did not differ significantly in terms of their GCS scores ($z = 2.44, p = .198$). However, the experienced officers' GCS score (39.15) was significantly higher than that of the undergraduates ($z = 3.57, p = .042$) and than that of the novice officers ($z = 6.01, p = .001$).

length within the police force (wherein officers are often involved in competitive interactions) is a plausible explanation for the experienced officers' heightened GCS.

This strong GCS among experienced observers could account for Meissner and Kassin's (2002) investigator bias effect: the aforementioned trend they found among experienced or trained observers toward making deceptiveness judgments. If officers enter the judgmental situation with the general suspicion that the witness is lying (high GCS), then they will selectively attend to cues associated with judgments of deceptiveness, will interpret ambiguous indicators as cues to deceit, and will overlook the cues associated with judgments of truthfulness (as found by Masip et al., 2000). This, eventually, will originate judgments of deceptiveness (Garrido et al., 2004).

Although this may be a useful explanation for accounting for the investigator bias effect when very experienced observers are used as participants, almost all of the officers who acted as observers in the studies reported by Garrido et al. (2004) and Masip et al. (2000, 2003) were novices. Therefore, according to the data in the present study, they probably did not have a particularly strong GCS. Obviously, since those participants' GCS was not measured, we cannot know for sure what their GCS was. For example, it could be the case that, unlike what seems to happen currently, the education that novice officers received as executive-level students at the police academy during the second half of the 1990s (when the data for Garrido et al.'s [2004] and Masip et al.'s [2000, 2003] reports were collected) created an early GCS among them. This GCS could have been responsible for these officers' confirmatory strategy when making their credibility judgments. However, beyond these speculations, we cannot discard the possibility that factors other than a heightened GCS influenced the results found by Garrido et al. (2004) and Masip et al. (2000, 2003) with novice officers.

For example, an additional factor that can influence police officers' credibility judgments is the very nature of the deceptive interactions in which they are often involved. The effect of this variable on Garrido et al.'s (2004) and Masip et al.'s (2000, 2003) research is questionable, since they did not use suspects as senders. Instead, they used witnesses. However, some considerations are worthy of mention. On the one hand, there is the role of the police. Officers must solve cases or, in other words, must find the guilty person or persons. This makes them eager to hear confessions. On the other hand, suspects indeed have very compelling reasons to lie, and officers are aware of this. As a result, they will be very suspicious of those who are denying their involvement in an offense. However, at the same time, regardless of their GCS, they probably will be very trusting of those who are admitting their guilt. One further reason for this trust is that a confession is often considered strong evidence that the suspect has indeed committed the offense (e.g., Conti, 1999; Kassin & Neumann, 1997; McCann, 1998). Thus, once a suspect has confessed, the case can be considered solved.

Recent research by Kassin, Meissner, and Norwick (2005) lends support to these notions: Police officers were more likely than undergraduates to *believe* false confessions of inmates. Therefore, it is apparent that the investigator bias does not consist merely of believing that every statement is a lie, but of believing that suspects are guilty of crimes. This is very reasonable, in view of the fact that officers all the time are hearing guilty people deny their involvement. However, officers hear lies very often, and this increases their generalized belief that people tend to lie.

This line of reasoning leads us to pose some interesting considerations with regard to the influence of GCS on the investigator bias effect. First, apparently it is not only the officers' heightened GCS that seems to lie behind that effect, but also other factors. One such factor might be the officers' implicit or explicit pressures to solve the case, coupled with the view that confessions are unquestionable indicators of guilt.

Second, as stated previously, the kind of state-suspicion situations in which experienced officers are often involved are peculiar in that guilty suspects often lie about their involvement in a crime, but innocent suspects never lie about their non-involvement. Admissions can solve the case, but initially they are rare. These frequent competitive interactions and the false denials officers hear might indeed increase officers' distrust, but the contribution of their increased GCS when interviewing suspects will probably be strongest when the latter are denying their involvement.

There are at least two reasons for this: a motivational one and a cognitive one. With regard to the former, a confession is what the officer is seeking in order to solve the case. Therefore, that officer has no interest at all in questioning that admission. With regard to the second, cognitive reason, officers (the same as all of us) are in general vulnerable to the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977). Even false confessions obtained by means of coercive tactics are normally believed. It has been argued that this is a result of misattributing the cause of these confessions as being internal (actual involvement) while discounting situational pressures to confess⁹ (e.g., Conti, 1999). These two reasons may prevent officers' GCS from making them disbelieve admissions.

In summary, experienced police officers' GCS might contribute to their distrust during interviews or when listening to statements. However, recent research by Kassin et al. (2005) suggests that the investigator bias effect does not consist

⁹Critics may ask why this argument is not applied to suspects' denials as well: If someone denies his or her involvement, then he or she must indeed be innocent (internal cause), and situational pressures toward denying one's involvement (i.e., fear of being punished) should be discounted. However, officers' role, their experience with false denials, and their understanding of the compelling situational forces pressuring guilty suspects to lie may indeed temper their tendency to make internal attributions in situations of this kind.

merely of a tendency to judge statements as deceptive, but also of a tendency to *believe* statements, provided they are incriminating. Reasons other than GCS—such as the need for officers to solve the case and the belief that confessions are indeed indicative of actual guilt—can account for officers' tendency to believe these incriminating statements of suspects.¹⁰

In any case, what the present data indicate is that police experience increases GCS, and that the police as a whole have relatively high GCS levels. This latter conclusion requires some clarification. Although, as discussed earlier, the novice officers were just as much officers as their more experienced fellows, unlike the experienced officers, the novice sample was very unrepresentative of the whole police guild. They were all particularly young, had achieved university degrees, and their experience as officers was almost nonexistent. On the contrary, the experienced officers' age, education, and job experience were not only more diverse, but also more representative of the whole police force that, day after day, do their job in the streets of our cities and in the police stations. Since the experienced, more representative sample had particularly high GCS ratings, we can infer that the police as a whole probably have a strong GCS.

As reported in the introduction, extant research conducted using non-officers as participants has found that the higher the observers' GCS, the more deceptiveness judgments they make. However, in view of the contribution of officers' GCS to the investigator bias effect that we are posing in the present report, replicating this finding with police samples is an essential task. Unfortunately, for reasons beyond our control, we could not access those officers again—either experienced or novice—who had participated in this study to ask them to perform a credibility-assessment task in order to examine whether those individuals who had higher GCS ratings also made more deceptiveness judgments than those who had lower GCS ratings. We are currently collecting new data from police officers to explore this question.

If the correlation between GCS and deceptiveness judgments is replicated with police samples—and there is no reason to think it will not be—officers' experience places them in a peculiar position: Not only is the presumption of innocence of the suspect put into jeopardy by the officers' heightened initial suspicion, but the actualization of such suspicion by means of a biased credibility judgment might have serious legal and personal consequences. Experience turns police officers into distrustful individuals, and this distrust eventually

¹⁰Whether officers' trust in suspects' confessions is not under the influence of their GCS should be tested empirically. It would be interesting if those officers with the highest GCS ratings were not only the most prone to judge denials as lies, but also the most prone to judge admissions as truths. This would suggest that, at least among police officers, GCS is but a component of a more general construct, such as a generalized distrust in other people's uprightness. Future research should test these suggestions.

turns them into excellent lie detectors, but also very poor detectors of truthfulness.

Making officers aware of their biases and vulnerabilities is a necessary first step toward their being able to increase their efficiency. Perhaps training programs designed to teach law-enforcement personnel to detect deception should focus not only on teaching them what the actual deception indicators are, a strategy whose usefulness seems to be limited (Köhnken, 1987). Instead, training programs should focus also on making officers aware of their GCS and their biased decision-making process and judgments.

Meissner and Kassin (2002) noted that, like job experience, traditional training programs do not increase overall accuracy, but only the proportion of deceptiveness judgments. This should not be surprising, since these programs often focus on indicators of *deceptiveness*; thus leading trainees to search actively for these cues instead of looking for both deceptiveness and truthfulness indicators, which often are overlooked. As suggested earlier, this strategy can only result in an increase of deceptiveness judgments. Training programs should direct trainees' attention to both truthfulness and deceptiveness indicators.

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