



*J. Widacki (ed.), Kierunki rozwoju instrumentalnej i nieinstrumentalnej detekcji kłamstwa (literally “Courses in the development of instrumental and non-instrumental lie detection”), Kraków 2018*

“The report of my death was an exaggeration”, Mark Twain is reported to have open a press conference called up after the papers published reports of his demise. Sometimes you can have an impression that many contemporary authors herald imminent death of polygraph examinations. However, the reading of the book reviewed demonstrates that such examinations are as alive and kicking as the American writer at the time of the conference. Moreover, they are in for a long and interesting life.

The research team headed by Jan Widacki (NCN grant #DEC-2013/11/B/HS5/03856) followed an ambitious and fundamental goal. They decided to stand up against the issues frequently taken up by critics of polygraph examinations. The first to be tackled (beginning of chapter one) concerned the interdisciplinary questions of the lie. The authors differentiate, as deeply as justifiably, the polysemanticity of the notions of “lie” and “lie detection”, which opens the possibility to diagnose the source of misunderstanding in the research field of polygraph expertise. Continuing with the terminology, the authors advocate using unified terminology, which the reviewers try to follow, as the arguments presented seem convincing. For if an alternative name (wariograf) for polygraph is only found in the Polish language, which makes it absolutely obscure, it can actually be abandoned.

The second part of the work contains a detailed description of an experiment. A group of 39 students were divided into two sets code-named “perpetrators” and “innocent suspects”. The “perpetrators” were given the task to shoot a toy pistol three times at a silhouette on a colourful poster. They were later informed to conceal that fact, especially from the person examining them on a polygraph machine. The “innocent suspects” neither visited the shooting range nor shot, nor even had any idea of what the other group did. They also underwent a polygraph examination in which they were expected to give honest answers. Each of the subjects in both groups received an additional financial motivation in case of expert’s mistake. UTAH ZCT test was used. In result, polygraphers assigned 11 subjects to the group of “liars”, and 26 subjects to the “non-deceptive” group, returning result considered inconclusive in case of two people. The 11 “liars” included 8 correctly diagnosed and three “non-deceptive” individuals classified mistakenly. In the group of 27 “non-deceptives” there were 19 correct and 7 failed diagnoses. An interpretation of the carefully documented results, explaining how the predictive value of polygraph assessment is quantified with respect to sensitivity, specificity, PPV, and NPV clearly demonstrates that, as much as you need to approach the results of polygraph expert opinion with a pinch of salt, such an opinion is generally useful, and it certainly must not be rejected as such. The authors consciously tackle issues of controversial nature, even if, as they note, controversy only remains in Poland. Apart from the aforementioned controversy about the name, part two provides precious comments on the polemic around polygraph examination techniques. It is a problem of major significance both with

respect to choosing the easier approach that moreover is more suitable for the practice and requirements of a criminal procedure (simplifying, the choice is between Lykken's and Reid's techniques) and to the numerous misunderstandings that have accrued around the alleged superiority of one technique over the other that have been presented in literature.

The brief third part of the work concerns the question of subjectivism of polygraph examinations. The results of research activities taken up by the authors show that the numerical methods of assessment of the recordings (curves) are more precise and reduce the scope for expert subjectivism. However, one should never expect full automation of such an investigated technique. A claim that is hard to challenge, the more so as it seems aligned with the intuitive opinion.

Part four discusses non-instrumental methods of the detection of deception, and the authors are right to note that these have been used in forensic practice for a long time, as a rule without even realising that. The considerations round up the issues of admissibility and the potential value of evidence from information acquired in this way in a fully justified manner. They moreover focus on the manner of minute-taking, which in our condition still leaves plenty to be wished for, and yet is of key importance from the point of view of assessment of credibility of testimonies, explanations, and other statements.

The fifth part of the work was devoted to the use of an infrared camera in an attempt to use facial skin temperature changes for detection of deception. The authors have designed an own method which they compared to the results of other experimental studies, commenting that it is still not fit for routine use. They believe the reasons for such a status quo to lie among others in the legal regulations binding in Poland and conditioning the conducting of an examination on the informed consent of the subject (examinee). They are right to diagnose the chaos in notions and the fundamental ethical obstacles, especially connected with non-invasive forms of polygraph examinations.

Being a result of a scientific project, the reviewed work thoroughly presents the courses of development of both instrumental and non-instrumental detection of deception, thus providing a valuable compendium of knowledge useful for both theoreticians and practitioners. The book points both to the

significant and apparently superficial problems, in the latter category referring to the discussions of the Polish doctrine considered somewhat futile by the authors. This is certainly an advantage of the book, retaining all due respect of the right to present personal views and convictions of individual representatives of the doctrine, not unlike the awareness that material discussion and criticism are crucial for the progress of science. The scientific value of the book as well as its practical use for judges, prosecutors, lawyers, experts and interested practitioners as well as for students are evident.

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