



THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE APPROACH

A guide to detecting lies about opinions.



“ **The Devil’s Advocate Approach is the only interview protocol aimed to distinguish between truthful and deceptive opinions.** ”

INTERVIEWING TO DETECT LIES ABOUT OPINIONS

The verbal cues lie tellers spontaneously report during interviews are weak and unreliable. Researchers therefore started to develop interview protocols focusing on enlarging such differences. Most of them deal with distinguishing between truthful and deceptive statements about alleged activities. The Devil’s Advocate Approach is the only interview protocol aimed to distinguish between truthful and deceptive opinions.

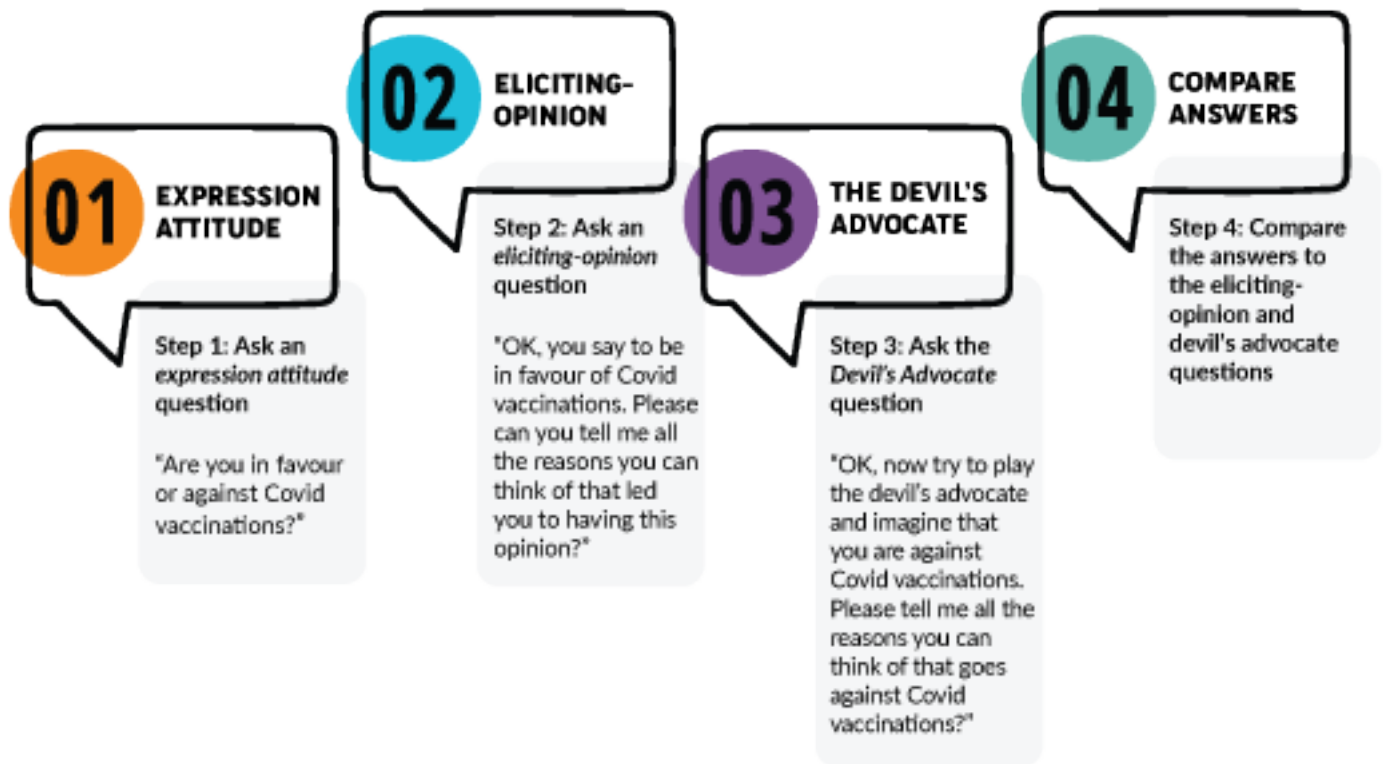
THE DEVIL’S ADVOCATE APPROACH RATIONALE

The Devil’s Advocate interview protocol consists of three questions:

1. First, an expression attitude question in which the interviewee is asked to whether s/he is in favour or against the opinion-topic.

2. Second, an eliciting-opinion question in which the interviewee is invited to report the arguments in favour of the view s/he just expressed.
3. Third, the Devil’s Advocate question, in which the interviewee is invited to report arguments against the view s/he just expressed.

In the Devil’s Advocate interview protocol, the answers to the eliciting-opinion and devil’s advocate questions are compared. Truth tellers provide honest answers to both questions. When answering the eliciting-opinion question they provide arguments they believe in. Although they present arguments in the devil’s advocate answer they do not believe in, they are telling the truth because they do not pretend to believe in these answers. Lie tellers have an opinion opposite to what they express. They lie when answering



both the eliciting-opinion and devil's advocate questions. In the eliciting-opinion answer they provide arguments they do not believe in whilst trying to convince the interviewer that they endorse these arguments. When providing the Devil's Advocate answer they are invited to give arguments against their alleged opinion, which is an invitation to express their true opinion. Yet, they are lying because they must pretend not to believe in the arguments they present when answering the devil's advocate question.

Truth tellers should find it easier to respond to the eliciting-opinion question than to the devil's advocate question. Arguments that support someone's attitude (eliciting-opinion question) are typically more readily available than reasons that oppose someone's attitude (devil's advocate question). Lie tellers are unlikely to show the opposite pattern to truth tellers' responses, because lie tellers will be motivated to use at least two counter-interrogation strategies: Preparation

and consistency. Lie tellers will probably think, prior to the interview, about arguments they can present that support their pretended opinion. This should improve the eloquence of their replies to the eliciting-opinion question. Lie tellers also strive to be consistent. Consistency in the Devil's Advocate interview would mean providing replies of similar eloquence to the eliciting-opinion and devil's advocate questions. The Devil's Advocate Approach therefore expects that lie tellers may attempt to produce similar responses to the eliciting-opinion and devil's advocate questions.

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VERBAL CUES

The verbal cues measured in the Devil's Advocate Approach refer to eloquence. The more *plausible* and more *immediate* the response, the more eloquent the response is. *Plausibility* is defined as "Does the answer sound reasonable and genuine and was there enough of an answer to sound convincing"; *Immediacy* is defined as "Is the answer given from a personal perspective and not distanced". See *Box 1* for examples.

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HYPOTHESES

In the Devil's Advocate Approach, two veracity differences can be distinguished. First, veracity differences when answering the eliciting-opinion question. It is expected that truth tellers are more eloquent than lie tellers when answering the eliciting-opinion question. Second, veracity differences when comparing answers to the eliciting-opinion and devil's advocate questions. It is expected that truth tellers are more eloquent when answering the eliciting-opinion question than when answering the devil's advocate question, whereas such difference is less noticeable in lie tellers.

FINDINGS TO DATE

Research to date showed support for both predictions:

- i. Truth tellers sounded more plausible and more immediate than lie tellers when answering the eliciting-opinion question;
- ii. Truth tellers, more than lie tellers, sounded more plausible and more immediate when answering the eliciting-opinion question than when answering the devil's advocate question. The effect sizes showed that these differences are large enough to be detected with the naked eye during interviews.





ELICITING OPINION QUESTION

PLAUSIBLE (6) AND IMMEDIATE (7). ABOUT TRAIN STRIKES

Interviewer: “OK, you say to be in favour of train strikes. Please can you tell me all the reasons you can think of that led you to having this opinion?”

Interviewee: “Yeah. So initially I just kind of thought uh another strike like the train workers or and I didn't really think oh I didn't think anything of it. I complete- I sympathise with what we're saying, but I just thought, OK, another strike. However, the people that are striking are highly intelligent, highly caring, highly motivated people. And as these strikes have just kept on and on and on. It's led me to then start thinking well, hold on a minute if if they're continually putting themselves in this position, they're continually risking people's lives, there must be something behind this. And just like I quite literally trust them with my life, with healthcare situations, I trust their decision on this, that there must be something, like they must believe in this super passionately and they must think it's the only way to go if they are putting themselves in that position again and again and again. So it has developed my support over time.”

PLAUSIBLE (6) AND IMMEDIACY (6) ABOUT POLITICAL MEETINGS AND ONLINE POSTS AS A PROTEST ACTION

Interviewer. “OK, you say to be in favour of political meetings and online posts as a protest action. Please can you tell me all the reasons you can think of that led you to having this opinion?”

Interviewee. “Uh so I think, participating in political meetings and sharing online posts, those are okay, politically, cause you're not being a threat to anyone in society, you're not endangering anyone, you're not getting physically violent, or uh obstructing other people in their day to day lives”

PLAUSIBLE (7) AND IMMEDIATE (7) ABOUT WEARING T-SHIRTS AND HAVING CAR STICKERS AS A PROTEST ACTION

Interviewer. “OK, you say to be in favour of wearing t-shirts and having car stickers as a protest action. Please can you tell me all the reasons you can think of that led you to having this opinion?”

Interviewee. “Okay yeah I think their actions are good er obviously they're very passionate about the environment which is completely acceptable erm and er they're going about it in a way that doesn't harm anybody it doesn't cause anyone any bother. Also on their shirts aren't anything like offensive you know I think if they had an image of a dead animal for example you know that would really be pushing it to the limit you know but you know in this case it's pretty harmless and um what they're doing wearing the shirts and having the car stickers this is stuff I've seen practised before and er I've never taken any issue to it um as said it's not causing anyone doing any wrong and it's also not illegal either that's also where a line might be you know whether it's breaking the law and this is far from breaking the law it's permitted under freedom of speech um yeah.”

Box 1: Plausibility and immediacy examples



DEVIL'S ADVOCATE QUESTION

IMPLAUSIBLE (1) BUT IMMEDIATE (6) ABOUT NHS STRIKES

Interviewer. "OK, now try to play the devil's advocate and imagine that you are against NHS strikes. Please tell me all the reasons you can think of that goes against NHS strikes?"

Interviewee. "Well, um living in the UK so many years I OK personally, I didn't have a lot of encounters with the NHS, but when I did um everything seemed fine. I mean, I never noticed anyone like being unhappy in the workplace or seen any problems within um like the medical centres. So yeah, that's why."

IMPLAUSIBLE (2) AND NOT IMMEDIATE (2) ABOUT THE INCLUSION POLICY AT SCHOOLS WHEREBY CHILDREN WITH BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS ARE KEPT IN THE MAINSTREAM SCHOOL CLASS

Interviewer. "OK, now try to play the devil's advocate and imagine that you are against the inclusion policy at schools whereby children with behavioural problems are kept in the mainstream school class. Please tell me all the reasons you can think of that goes against inclusion policy at schools?"

Interviewee. "Yeah I think I'd struggle to do that to be honest because I've I've been in that setting. I mean sometimes taking children out of mainstream schools and putting them in like a pupil referral unit can work for some those that are definitely for the works for the mainstream young people because it takes the distraction away. But I think people need to again sorry I'm I'm f- I'm I'm kind of like making it turn the other way again but I think kind of keeping those young people in those schools is a good thing for those mainstream peoples as well to be able to kind of contend with distraction also. But yeah so sometimes it works kind of taking them out and putting them into a pupil referral unit but not all the time. Providing an alternative education I suppose would be a kind of favour for not being in mainstream but that that's the only kind of thing I could kind of argue really. So I was glad I got this."

IMPLAUSIBLE (2) AND NOT IMMEDIATE (2) ABOUT BEING HAPPY TO HAVE A HOMOSEXUAL FRIEND

Interviewer. "OK, now try to play the devil's advocate and imagine that you are against having a homosexual friend. Please tell me all the reasons you can think of that goes against having a homosexual friend?"

Interviewee. "I'm imagining like in America when they use like gay conversion and I'd be like some weird parent that would be concerned that having a gay teacher might make my child gay if I was homophobic. And in terms of religion, I think that there are some religions that see it as a sin like Catholicism. And they would probably I would probably use the Bible even though it was written like 2000 years ago. And maybe if I'm sort of right wing and conventional and believe in a kind of family set up where you need to like marry and have children. So it would be like oh you can't be gay because you won't be able to like have a child."

Box 1: Plausibility and immediacy examples

READ MORE

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About the project

This guide was produced from the CREST project that examines the use of Cognitive Credibility Assessment techniques regarding omissions when reporting on past events and genuine/deceptive beliefs and attitudes. You can find all the outputs from this project at: www.crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/online-efficacy-of-cognitive-credibility-assessment/

**READ
MORE**

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