Deceiver's distrust: denigration as a consequence of undiscovered deception.

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Abstract:

Although psychologists have long recognized the havoc that a discovered lie can wreak on a relationship, this study indicates that even an undiscovered deception can bring about negative consequences. An experiment explored one such consequence by examining the hypothesis that in a dyadic relationship, if one partner lies to the other, the liar will begin to perceive the recipient as less honest. Participants who were induced to lie to a partner in a believable and, in some conditions, damaging manner then rated the partner on a variety of traits, including honesty. The results indicated a significant reduction in perceived honesty of the recipient of the lie, particularly by participants who told damaging lies. An exploration into the underlying mechanisms of the effect suggested that deceiver's distrust operates through affective means, with the liars justifying their actions in a self-protection motivated version of the false consensus effect.

Text

The study of dishonesty has occupied the minds and laboratories of psychologists for years. This body of research has explored the detection of lies (Ekman, 1985), the motivations (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996) and personalities (Kashy & DePaulo, 1996) of liars, and the negative effects of discovered deceit in a relationship (Knapp, 1984; McCornack & Levine, 1990; Miller, Mongeau, & Sleight, 1986).

There is reason to believe that--even if it is never detected--deception can still damage a relationship. Specifically, in a dyadic relationship, when one partner lies to the other, the liar may begin to perceive the recipient of the lie as less honest as a result of the liar's own deception. For example, if a husband has an extramarital affair and does not tell his wife, then he may begin to see her as less honest as a result of his own infidelity. This deceiver's distrust could occur through one or a combination of three psychological processes: (a) a false consensus effect, in which the liar infers the level of dishonesty in others from his or her own salient behavior; (b) an ego-protective mechanism, in which the liar defends self-image by coming to believe that anyone would have acted the same way; and (c) a belief in a just world, in which the liar derogates the character of the victim of the deceit to maintain the belief that bad outcomes do not afflict good people.(1)

False Consensus: Deceitful Behavior as Information

The literature concerning the false consensus effect indicates that people tend to "see their own behavioral choices and judgments as relatively common and appropriate to existing circumstances while viewing alternative responses as uncommon, deviant, or inappropriate" (Ross, Greene, & House, 1977, p. 280), thus generating a false consensus for their attitudes and actions. This phenomenon has manifested for beliefs, behavioral intentions, attitudes, and behaviors (Alicke & Largo, 1995; Dunning & Hayes, 1996; also see Mullen et al., 1985, and Marks & Miller, 1987, for meta-analytic and theoretical reviews, respectively) and has been demonstrated both cross-culturally (Manstead, 1982; van der Pligt, 1984) and across age groups (Yinon, Mayraz, & Fox, 1994).

One mechanism proposed to mediate the false consensus effect is anchoring and inadequate adjustment. (See Marks & Miller, 1987, for a review of other possible mechanisms.) Fiske and Taylor (1991) explain that when making judgments under uncertainty, people will sometimes reduce ambiguity by starting with a beginning reference point or anchor and then adjust it to reach a final conclusion" (p. 389). In social judgments, errors are often made when the judge uses himself or herself as the anchor and adjusts inadequately to account for personal or situational differences (Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Within the context of deceiver's distrust, this process begins when a relevant question becomes salient through a request for judgment. This request can originate from within the liar or from another source. To continue with the example of our errant husband, suppose a friend says, "I saw your wife out with George the other day. Do you think she might be having an affair?" This makes salient the issue of fidelity in his marriage. Looking to the larger society he sees many examples of both faithful and unfaithful wives. Thus, he knows that infidelity happens outside of his marriage. Yet past studies have shown that without specific evidence to the contrary, spouses consider their relationships to be relatively free of deceit (Miller, Mongeau, & Sleight, 1986). Once the husband has an affair, however, he has available his own highly salient example. Seeing himself as acting deceitfully, he perceives that his partner might act similarly. Krueger and Clement (1994) label this nonstatistical reasoning egocentrism and cite its "implications of rigidity of judgment and a sense of the special value of self" (p. 607).

Thus, the husband anchors his assessment on his own infidelity and inadequately adjusts, concluding that his wife is also having an affair. In more general terms, the liar's use of anchoring and adjustment causes a belief that others are similarly dishonest (see the top path of Figure 1).

[Figure 1 ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Ego Protection: Normalizing Deception to Salvage Self-Image

Anchoring and inadequate adjustment provides a wholly cognitive explanation for deceiver's distrust, making use of the liar's highly salient behavioral example as a reference point from which to predict others' behavior. However, the act of lying provides more than a simple point of

reference. Higgins's (1987) self-discrepancy theory suggests that the incompatibility between the lie and the liar's desired self-image will cause distress. This view is supported by other research demonstrating that acts such as dishonesty and interpersonal damage cause uncomfortable negative emotions and a desire for negative-state relief (Klass, 1978) even when the lie was motivated by strong incentives (Rossomando & Weiss, 1970).

Similarly, cognitive dissonance theory suggests that lies create negative (i.e., dissonant) feelings that motivate the liar to resolve the discrepancy between his or her values and actions (Festinger, 1957; Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959). According to Aronson's (1969) reformulation of dissonance theory, this motivation should be particularly strong in the case of lies because the dissonance involves the self-concept. Festinger (1957) offers three modes of dissonance reduction, each of which has received support in subsequent empirical work: (a) changing one of the dissonant elements (Cooper & Fazio, 1984), (b) trivializing one or more of the elements (Simon, Greenberg, & Brehm, 1995), and (c) seeking out consonant cognitions (Frey, 1986).

The liar may be limited in easy dissonance reduction strategies, however, particularly when the lie has caused damage, when the past behavior cannot be changed, and when it may prove difficult to trivialize. Moreover, the liar's self-image may be resilient against alteration and diminishment, particularly for those with high self-esteem. Yet, one avenue remains open--the avenue of seeking consonant cognitions. Specifically, the liar may attempt to generate a normalization belief, in essence choosing to see the behavior or trait as well within the normal range for his or her reference or comparison group (Festinger, 1954) (see the middle path of Figure 1). For example, Kiesler and Singer (1963) found that participants who inflicted electric shocks on another participant were able to justify their aggressive behavior by saying that similar people would have acted in the same way. A liar may find this dissonance reduction strategy easiest to implement when the liar cares little for the target. In other instances the liar may prefer to change the self-image rather than the image of a cared-for target such as a spouse or a child.

Derogating the Victim of Deception

Lerner (Lerner & Matthews, 1967; Lerner & Simmons, 1966) has provided evidence that the derogation of an innocent victim sometimes stems from the belief in a just world, in which good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people. Lerner (1974) argued further that the tendency for harm-doers to ascribe negative characteristics to their victims (Berscheid & Walster, 1969) can be understood in terms of this tendency to see the world as just. Thus, a deceiver who discovers that the lie damaged its recipient would derogate the victim's characteristics--including but not limited to those associated with honesty--to maintain the desired fit between the victim's outcomes and character (see the bottom path of Figure 1).

The Experiment

The goal of this experiment was to determine whether the deceiver's distrust phenomenon exists and, if it was observed, to gain evidence for its underlying mediator(s). The experiment employed two experimental conditions in which participants lied to a partner and one control condition in which participants did not lie. The experimental conditions were differentiated in

terms of the damage caused by the lie. In the damage condition participants were informed that the partner lost extra credit as a result of the lie. In the no damage and control conditions the partner retained the extra credit.

Competing Predictions

A reduction in perceived honesty of the partner by participants in the experimental conditions relative to participants in the control condition would support the existence of the deceiver's distrust effect. An examination of the other dependent variables and the differences in perceived honesty between the experimental conditions would then offer evidence for the underlying mediator(s) of this effect.

If deceiver's distrust operates as a wholly cognitive false consensus process, then the liar's deceptive behavior itself acts as evidence for dishonesty in others. That is, from his or her own deceit the liar infers that others are deceitful. According to this model, the eventual harm done by the lie is not relevant to the honesty judgment. As such, the wholly cognitive false consensus model predicts an equivalent reduction in perceived honesty of the partner by participants in the no damage and damage conditions relative to participants in the control condition. In addition, the scope of such an effect also should extend to the participants' perceptions of the honesty of a typical undergraduate in both conditions.2 Statistically, the perception of honesty of both the partner and the typical student should display a significant linear trend as well as a significant quadratic trend (see the top graph of Figure 2).

[Figure 2 ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

If, however, deceiver's distrust is a motivated process, then the ramifications of the lie become relevant. A lie that does not do any damage may bring some negative feelings, but they will be considerably less intense than those associated with a damaging lie. That is, harm-doing should be more discrepant with preferred views of self and, hence, should produce more dissonance and guilt (Aronson, 1969; Higgins, 1987). The easiest way for our participants to reduce or avoid these negative feelings would be to convince themselves that their dishonesty is not diagnostic of specially impaired character but is commonplace--that is, a motivated form of false consensus. Thus, according to this model, perceptions of honesty should be greatest in the no lie condition, intermediate in the nondamaging lie condition, and lowest in the damaging lie condition. Statistically, the ego-protection motivated false consensus model predicts a linear trend in the reduction in perceived honesty of the partner by participants in the no damage and damage conditions relative to participants in the control condition. This linear trend, without an accompanying quadratic trend, represents the increased strength of the effect for those telling damaging lies. Furthermore, this pattern should apply both to ratings of the honesty of the partner and of the typical undergraduate (see the middle graph of Figure 2).

Finally, if deceiver's distrust is simply a specific instance of derogation of the victim mediated by a belief in a just world, then the effect should disappear when the lie is shown not to have caused any damage. That is, because the outcome another experiences is a central factor in determining one's judgment of the other according to just world theory, there should be little need to devalue

a recipient of a harmless lie. In addition, because restoration of a belief in a just world involves general derogation, this model predicts a reduction in assessments of both honesty as well as the partner's other characteristics for participants who told damaging lies relative to participants who did not lie. Statistically then, only the damaging lie condition should produce a significant reduction in perceived honesty and only for the partner. Furthermore, this pattern of derogation should also apply to the partner's non-honesty related traits (see the bottom graph of Figure 2).

METHOD

Overview of Experiment

While seated in a waiting area, the participant was given an answer to an experimental task by a confederate posing as another participant who had mistakenly arrived a day early. After dismissing the confederate, the experimenter ushered the participant into an impression-formation study that ostensibly examined how first impressions evolve over a series of interactions. The participant exchanged biographical information with a partner through a video conference and then indicated first impressions across a series of personality characteristics using a 7-point Likert-type scale. The partner's responses were prerecorded on a videotape to keep the recipient consistent between participants. The participant then was given 2 minutes to perform a perceptual task. Accurate performance on the task would make the participant eligible for an additional half experimental credit point. For experimental participants the task corresponded to the answer given earlier by the confederate. For control participants the task was unrelated to the answer.

Regardless of the answer given, the participant was informed that the answer was quite accurate and that he or she then would be required to describe the strategy used to the partner, who needed the strategy to answer the problem and earn the extra credit. Experimental participants, having simply used the confederate's answer, were forced to fabricate a strategy on the spot. Participants then received feedback indicating either that the partner had successfully solved the puzzle and earned the extra credit or that the partner had failed to solve the puzzle and thus lost the extra credit. The partner then described the strategy for a different task. After this exchange the participant indicated second impressions across a series of synonymous characteristics.

In sum, through a ruse experimental participants were induced to lie to a partner in a way that did or did not damage the partner's receipt of extra credit. Control participants were not induced to lie. All participants then rated the partner (and the average college student) on a variety of traits, including honesty.

Participants

The experiment consisted of 81 Arizona State University (ASU) undergraduates (50 women, 31 men) who participated in partial fulfillment of a class requirement.

Procedure

In developing the methodology two previous experiments offered successful procedures for inducing participants to lie (Exline, Thibaut, Hickey, & Gumpert, 1970; Gregory, Mowen, & Linder, 1978). The present study incorporated ideas taken from both of these previous experiments.

The actual experiment began with the participant sitting down on a chair in the waiting area. A minute later, a confederate, posing as another participant, sat down on a chair next to the participant. The confederate chatted with the participant and after establishing rapport said, "But my roommate, who's a math major, was just in this one last week. He/she said it was pretty hard." If the participant was in the experimental condition, then the confederate continued, 'Where's this poster and they make you count all these dots on it. But he/she answered 5,000 and got the extra credit so I'm definitely putting down 5,000."(3) If the participant was in the control condition, then the confederate said the following, 'Where's this booklet and they make you count all these cars in it. But he/she answered 35 and got the extra credit so I'm definitely putting down 35."

Later in the experiment all participants were asked to perform the dot problem; thus, experimental participants had been given a relevant answer, whereas control participants had been given an answer to an irrelevant problem. Both the subject matter and the answer to the irrelevant problem were designed to be different enough from the actual dot problem to ensure that control participants realized that their information was not applicable.

After this exchange the experimenter walked in; looked mildly surprised to see two participants; and, after checking their appointments, discovered that the confederate had mistakenly shown up a day early. The confederate left.

The experimenter then ushered the participant in and asked how many credits the participant needed to fulfill the class requirement. Participants who did not require the extra credit were given half credit and dismissed. This eligibility criterion, which was used to en sure that participants would be motivated to perform well on the puzzles, was listed on the sign-up sheet for the experiment; however, some participants either overlooked or ignored it.

Once eligibility was determined the experimenter explained that the participant would be participating in a study that examined social perception through the media. Specifically, the experiment was examining how a first impression changed over a series of interactions. The participant would be paired with another participant and would work on a series of perceptual puzzles. Accurate answers on these puzzles would earn the participant additional experimental credit. The participant would be interacting with the partner but gain or loss of the extra credit did not depend directly on the performance of the partner.

After delivering the speech, the experimenter left briefly. Fifteen seconds later, the experimenter returned and secretly turned on the videotape using a hidden pause switch. The camera was trained on a man or woman (same sex as that of the participant) in his or her early 20s who was casually dressed. The partner described his or her background and revealed predominantly neutral information that contained points that a participant could use to see dishonesty if it was

sought. For example, the partner indicated that he or she had chosen to attend ASU because, "I heard that the alumni here really pull strings for each other so it's easier to get a job."

The experimenter then gave the participant the first impression questionnaire, which asked the participant to rate the partner on a series of eight characteristics. When this was completed, the experimenter trained the camera on the participant and prompted the participant to tell the partner something about himself or herself.

The participant then flipped a coin ostensibly to determine on which puzzles he or she would work. Regardless of the result, the participant was given the dot puzzle. The puzzle required the participant to estimate within 20% the number of dots on the poster.

The experimenter left and then returned 2 minutes later. After examining the participant's answer, the experimenter looked impressed and congratulated the participant on successfully completing the puzzle.(4) The participant was then informed that the partner also did well and that now each was going to work on the other puzzle. However, because each had performed well, they would begin by exchanging strategies, each explaining to the other how they had solved their puzzle. Then, because each would have the other's successful strategy to use, they would each have only 30 seconds to do the other puzzle. The participant was also reminded that the partner could lose the extra credit if the participant did not give an adequate strategy. Finally, the participant was told that, because the partner had introduced himself or herself first, the participant would describe his or her strategy immediately.

The experimenter then trained the camera on the participant, prompting if the participant was too brief. Experimental participants, having used the confederate's answer, were then forced to lie to their partners.(5) Control participants, on the other hand, simply told their partners their actual strategy.(6)

The experimenter then left to give the partner a chance to do the dot puzzle. After returning, the experimenter delivered the damage manipulation. In the no damage and control conditions the experimenter said, "Looks like your strategy was good enough. Your partner got within 20% so he/she gets to keep his/her extra credit." In the damage condition the experimenter said, "Looks like your strategy wasn't good enough. Your partner did not get within 20% so he/she loses his/her extra credit."

The experimenter then secretly turned on the videotape and the same partner appeared on screen and described the strategy that was used to solve the picture recognition puzzle. The second puzzle was constructed so that this clue would allow the participant to answer it well within the 30-second limit.

The experimenter then administered the second impression questionnaire and explained that the questionnaire was looking for how the participant's impression of the partner had changed since the first time the participant filled out the form. This second questionnaire asked the participant to rate the partner and a typical ASU student on eight characteristics that were synonymous with those asked previously.

After the participant completed the questionnaire, the experimenter administered the picture recognition puzzle. The experiment was then concluded and the participant was probed for suspicion and fully debriefed.

Independent Variables

The design included two independent variables: three levels of the lie condition (i.e., no lie, nondamaging lie, damaging lie) and two levels of participant gender.

Dependent Variables

The main measures used were the participant's second impressions of the partner and a typical ASU student. These impressions were measured using a Likerttype scale ranging from 0 (not at all...) to 6 (very...), in which ... was replaced with smart, inventive, careful, self-assured, truthful, tolerant, friendly, and easygoing.

The covariates used with the main measures were the participant's first impressions of the partner and the participant's impressions of a typical ASU student, which were assessed on a questionnaire administered 3 weeks before the first run. These were measured using a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (not at all...) to 6 (very...), in which . . . was replaced with intelligent, creative, conscientious, self-confident, honest, openminded, outgoing, and relaxed.

A series of additional measures assessed the participant's eligibility for inclusion in the data analysis. These included the participant's answers to four procedure checks (i.e., "What was the gender of your partner? .... Did you describe your background first or did your partner?" "Did you get the extra credit?" and "Did your partner get the extra credit?") and the experimenter's notes on the participant's debriefing.

RESULTS(7)

Of the 81 participants whose runs were completed, 7 were dropped from the analyses due to suspicion (3 from the no lie condition, 1 from the no damage condition, and 3 from the damage condition) and 2 were dropped for failing a procedure check (both failed to remember whether their partner retained or lost the extra credit--1 from no damage, 1 from damage).(8)

Participants' perceptions of their partner's seven nonhonesty traits were averaged into a composite (Cronbach's [Alpha] = .63). Similarly, the perceptions of a typical student's seven non-honesty traits were also averaged into a composite (Cronbach's [Alpha] = .60).

For all analyses, the second measure of the participants' impressions of their partners and a typical ASU student (taken after the experimental manipulation) was compared between groups with planned contrasts using the first measure as a covariate. These covariates were all significantly correlated with their respective dependent variables, with correlation coefficients ranging from .281 to .646. A series of one-way ANOVAs revealed no significant differences between groups on either of the covariates measured after assignment to condition (partner's

honesty and partner's other traits) thus satisfying the ANCOVA assumption that the covariates were not affected by group assignment. (See Table 1 for the adjusted means and standard deviations for each group.)

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TABLE 1: Adjusted Cell Means and Standard Deviations Within Each
Condition

                                    No Lie,              Lie,
Measure                            No Damage          No Damage

Partner's honesty                  5.00 1.24)         4.50 (1.01)
Partner's other traits             3.97 (.85)         3.72  (.85)
Typical student's honesty          3.7  (.47)         3.39  (.91)
Typical student's other traits     4.25 (.59)         4.01  (.67)


                                      Lie,
Measure                              Damage

Partner's honesty                   4.35 (.97)
Partner's other traits              3.61 (.86)
Typical student's honesty           3.12 (.81)
Typical student's other traits      4.00 (.53)
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NOTE: There were 18 participants in the no lie, no damage condition; 30 participants in the lie, no damage condition; and 24 participants in the lie, damage condition. Numbers in parentheses indicate standard deviation.

A series of two-way ANCOVAs revealed no significant main effects of gender or interactions between gender of participant and lie condition on perception of the partner or a typical ASU student. As such, all further analyses collapse across gender.

Overall, participants who lied to their partners perceived their partners as significantly less honest (M = 4.43) as compared to participants who did not lie (M = 5.00), $F(1, 68) = 6.30$, $p = .01$, $[[Omega].sup.2] = .07$. This effect represents the first empirical demonstration of the deceiver's distrust phenomenon. The existence of an independent deceiver's distrust effect is further supported by the continued reliability of this contrast even when the effects of generalized derogation, as measured by the seven nonhonesty traits of the partner, are partialed out, $F(1, 67) = 3.50$, $p = .07$, $[[Omega].sup.2] = .03$. Figure 3 presents participants' ratings of the covariate-adjusted mean differences between the control (no lie) and the two lie conditions.

[Figure 3 ILLUSTRATION OMITTED]

Predictions from the motivated false consensus model aligned bestwith the data. Specifically, perceptions of the partner's honesty among the three conditions displayed a significant linear trend, $F(1, 68) = 6.15$, $p = .02$, $[[Omega].sup.2] = .07$, and no significant quadratic trend, $F(1, 68) = .74$, ns, $[[Omega].sup.2] = .00$. The condition means ordered themselves according to model-based predictions: The no lie control participants provided the highest honesty ratings (M = 5.00), the lie/no damage condition participants perceived an intermediate level of honesty (M =

4.50), and the lie/damage condition participants saw the least honesty (M = 4.35). Contrasts within the significant linear trend revealed that both the lie/no damage condition and the lie/damage condition differed at least marginally significantly from the no lie control--F(1, 68) = 3.96, p = .051, [[Omega].sup.2] = .04 and F(1, 68) = 6.15, p = .02, [[Omega].sup.2] = .07, respectively; however, they did not differ from one another--F(1, 68) = .44, ns, [[Omega].sup.2] = -.01. In a similar fashion, perceptions of the typical student's honesty also displayed a significant linear effect, F(1, 61) = 5.57, p = .02, [[Omega].sup.2] = .07 and no significant quadratic trend, F(1, 61) = .01, ns, [[Omega].sup.2] =-.02. Again, the condition means fit the predicted pattern in that honesty ratings declined from the no lie control condition (M = 3.70) to the lie/no damage condition (M = 3.39) to the lie/damage condition (M = 3.12). Contrasts among these means revealed that only the difference between the no lie condition and the lie/damage condition was significant, F(1, 61) = 5.57, p = .02, [[Omega].sup.2] = .07. The lie/no damage condition did not differ significantly from either the no lie condition, F(1, 61) = 1.77, ns, [[Omega].sup.2] = .01 or the lie/damage condition, F(1, 61) = 1.56, ns, [[Omega].sup.2] = .01.

As can be seen from a comparison of Figures 2 and 3, the wholly cognitive false consensus model did not fit the data nearly as well. The trends analyses performed on the partner and typical student honesty ratings showed none of the nonlinearity predicted by this model (quadratic trends tests for both analyses showed Fs [is less than] 1).

Finally, the just world model received mixed support. Specifically, participants who told damaging lies displayed a marginally significant derogation of the partner's non-honesty characteristics (M = 3.61) as compared to participants who did not lie (M= 3.97), F(1, 68) = 3.13, p = .08, [[Omega].sup.2] = .03, as would be predicted. However, the obtained generalization of the derogation effects to the typical student's honesty is not consistent with a just-world-based mediation of deceiver's distrust. Additional evidence that the just world model does not adequately account for the deceiver's distrust effect can be seen in the previously discussed failure of the effect to disappear after the effects of general derogation of the partner had been partialed out.

DISCUSSION

Great writers have warned about the difficulties of maintaining a lie, and this view is supported by modern psychologists (DePaulo, Lanier, & Davis, 1983; Ekman, 1985; Kraut, 1978). However, the ramifications of deception can extend well beyond Sir Walter Scott's tangled web. As the results of this experiment suggest, the negative effects of a lie can begin well before its discovery.

Specifically, it was predicted that a liar will begin to perceive the recipient of the lie as less honest as a result of the liar's own deception. The results supported this hypothesis; participants who lied to their partners perceived them as significantly less honest relative to participants who did not lie. Furthermore, this effect appears to be independent of a generalized derogation of the victim.

This deceiver's distrust may arise from three distinct processes: a cold and wholly cognitive false consensus mechanism that uses anchoring and inadequate adjustment; an ego-protective false consensus mechanism that operates through the motivated construction of a normalizing belief in others' dishonesty; or as an aspect of derogation of the victim mediated by a belief in a just world.

An ego-protection motivated version of the false consensus effect received greatest support. Participants displayed the predicted linear trend in their reductions in perceived honesty of both the partner and the larger peer group, although the lie/no damage and the lie/damage conditions did not differ significantly. This model was supported over the wholly cognitive false consensus model by the lack of corresponding quadratic trends. Thus, the results suggest that deceiver's distrust is a motivated process, with the greater ego threat stemming from a damaging lie that leads to greater derogation of others' honesty. This motivated false consensus phenomenon has been suggested in previous research that concerns the assessment of peer risk behaviors (Gibbons, Helweg-Larsen, & Gerrard, 1995) and peer homosexuality (Bramel, 1963).

Finally, the data suggest that a belief in a just world may account for some of the deceiver's distrust phenomenon. Specifically, participants who told damaging lies did display a marginally significant derogation of the partner's non-honesty-related traits. However, the marginal character of the effect leaves the conclusion ambiguous.

Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara, and Pastorelli (1996) have presented a number of cognitive mechanisms whereby a transgressor can avoid self-sanction. The most effective of these included the use of moral justification, euphemistic language, and contrasts with more culpable behavior of others. The present study suggests that another mechanism should be added to the list--the motivated development of a normalizing belief. Participants in this experiment, left with little room to justify or cloak their lies, compared their behavior not with more reprehensible actions but with equally blameworthy activities perceived in their peers.

Implications for Interpersonal Relationships

When suspicion enters into a relationship, it can begin a downward spiral leading to further suspicion, eventually damaging both trust and intimacy (Knapp, 1984; Miller et al., 1986). However, suspicion does not necessarily enter a relationship through the detection of a lie, as is commonly thought. Instead, as this experiment demonstrated, suspicion may actually come about as a consequence of an undiscovered deception, with distrust growing within the liar as a side effect of the act of lying.

The negative effects of deception are not limited to dyadic relationships. With the increasingly complex and esoteric nature of technology, trust and reputation play ever increasing roles in modern business exchanges between individuals and groups or between organizations (Kramer & Tyler, 1996). The results presented here suggest that this crucial trust can be broken by unscrupulous business practices, even if such behavior remains undetected (Cialdini, 1996).

Further examination of deceiver's distrust could focus on the issue of its generality. For example, the present experiment used newly created dyads and focused on first impressions. Social perception in long-standing relationships may operate through different mechanisms, particularly when the liar's caring for the target may motivate the liar to avoid target denigration. Future studies could supplement the current findings using a modified methodology in which two participants interact face-to-face, one the liar and the other the target. This method would test the importance of proximity as a moderator of deceiver's distrust. Additional research could study existing dyads, either in a nonexperimental manner by tapping into past relationship experiences or in an experimental setting such as the face-to-face scenario described previously. Such studies could offer valuable insights into the ways that lies affect and infect ongoing relationships.

NOTES

(1.) The efficacy of paper and pencil honesty tests that are often used to screen employees, such as the Reid Report (1984), rely in part on the existence of a deceiver's distrust type effect. Specifically, a factor analysis of the Reid Report honesty test done by Cunningham and Ash (1988) reported four major factors. The fourth factor, labeled "the Other-Projection factor," asked that "respondents indicate the extent to which they see dishonest intentions or behaviors in others" (p. 54). However, a distinction should be made between deceiver's distrust and this assumption. Whereas the honesty tests rely on the effect of a predisposition to lie, the present theory predicts a change in perception caused by the act of lying.

(2.) Because the experimental dyad is newly created and temporary, it is unlikely that participants would perceive separate sets of norms applying within and without the dyad.

(3.) This number varied to keep the experimenter blind to the participant's condition.

(4.) The poster contained approximately 8,300 dots. Participants' answers ranged from 1,200 to 48,000, with the exception of one participant who answered 4. Because it would have been implausible to claim that 4 was within 20% of the actual number of dots, the run was aborted.

(5.) It should be noted that only one participant admitted to having been given the answer by the confederate. As it would have been implausible to continue, the run was aborted.

(6.) It might be reasonably asked whether the participants in the experimental conditions really told a lie. Although the participants were not asked directly whether they had lied, for a reasons suggest that they did. First, a number of participants expressed embarrassment and concern during debriefing about having been "caught in a lie." Second, the answers that participants in the lie conditions gave regarding the number of dots on the poster (M = 5,482) aligned closely with the number that they received from the confederate (M= 5,167), whereas the answers from control participants (M = 8,389) aligned closely with the actual number of dots on the poster (approximately 8,300). Third, even if participants had formed their own strategies to confirm the answer, all but one lied by omission by not mentioning the confederate when asked how they had come up with their answer. Finally, the results themselves offer some evidence that participants

lied because the observed reduction in perceived honesty would be difficult to account for had the participants not been lying.

(7.) In an effort to conserve experimental resources, another study was dovetailed with the current experiment. This second study sought to show that lies can be more easily detected by forcing the liar to perform a distracting task while lying. Seventy-four participants were run in the distracted conditions. Because of concerns that the distraction manipulation might interfere with the deceiver's distrust process, an a priori decision was made to exclude these participants from the analyses. However, even when the distracted participants were included, the major finding of this study remained significant. Specifically, participants who lied still perceived their partners as significantly less honest (M = 4.47) as compared to those who did not lie (M = 4.82), $F(1,134) = 4.20$, $p = .04$, $[[Omega].sub.2] = .02$.

(8.) In any experiment that relies on random assignment to ensure equivalence of groups, exclusion of participants raises questions of internal validity. Because the present study excludes participants for a number of reasons, a brief discussion of these issues seems in order. First, the exclusion of participants who did not require the extra credit has no effect on the internal validity because this criterion was determined a priori and was independent of group assignment. This exclusion is analogous to a male participant showing up for an experiment designed exclusively for female participants. Second, the exclusion of participants in the distraction conditions has no effect on internal validity because of the random assignment to both the distraction and nondistraction conditions. Finally, although the removal of the 7 suspicious participants as well as the 2 participants who failed a procedure check does raise the possibility of decreased internal validity, three reasons argue against this. First, these participants were relatively evenly distributed across conditions. Second, the major reason offered by participants for their suspicion was unconvincing acting on the partner's videotaped biographical segment, a segment which preceded all relevant condition differentiation. Third, inclusion of these participants did not change the major finding: Participants who lied still perceived their partners as significantly less honest (M = 4.37) as compared to those who did not lie (M = 4.88), $F(1, 77) = 5.02$, $p = .03$, $[[Omega].sub.2] = .05$.

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