

Interpersonal Deception Theory

of David Buller & Judee Burgoon

David Buller (AMC Cancer Research Center, Denver) and Judee Burgoon (University of Arizona) have conducted over two dozen experiments in which they ask participants to deceive another person. These researchers explain that people often find themselves in situations where they make statements that are less than completely honest in order “to avoid hurting or offending another person, to emphasize their best qualities, to avoid getting into a conflict, or to speed up or slow down a relationship.”¹ Put yourself in the following situation and consider how you might respond:

You’ve been dating Pat for nearly three years and feel quite close in your relationship. Since Pat goes to a different school upstate, the two of you have agreed to date other people. Nevertheless, Pat is quite jealous and possessive. During the school year you see Pat only occasionally, but you call each other every Sunday and talk for over an hour. On Friday one of your friends invites you to a party on Saturday night, but the party is “couples only,” so you need a date. There’s no way that Pat could come down for the weekend. You decide to ask someone from your comm class who you’ve been attracted to so that you can go to the party. The two of you go and have a great time. On Sunday afternoon, there’s a knock on your door and it’s Pat. Pat walks in and says, “I decided to come down and surprise you. I tried calling you all last night, but you weren’t around. What were you doing?”²

Buller and Burgoon discuss three types of response you might give if you decide not to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. First, you could lie: “I was at the library getting ready for my comm theory exam.” Second, you could tell part of the truth while leaving out important details: “I went to a party at a friend’s apartment.” Or third, you could be intentionally vague or evasive: “I went out for a while.”

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Following the lead of others who study verbal deceit, Buller and Burgoon label these three strategies *falsification*, *concealment*, and *equivocation*. The three differ in that falsification creates a fiction, concealment hides a secret, and equivocation dodges the issue. Yet all three messages fall under the umbrella concept of *deception*, which Buller and Burgoon define as “a message knowingly transmitted by a sender to foster a false belief or conclusion by the receiver.”³

Would Pat be able to spot the deception? Interpersonal deception theory says probably not. Yet most people are confident they could, and it’s doubtful that this jealous romantic partner would be an exception.⁴ Working on the popular assumption that nonverbal communication is hard to fake, Pat would probably check your facial expression and listen to the sound of your voice to confirm or disconfirm your answer.

Folk wisdom provides a rationale for monitoring nonverbal cues for signs of deceit. When people won’t look us straight in the eye, we assume they have something to hide. We also tend to believe that nervous laughter and hurried speech reflect the fear of being caught in a lie.

Although this thinking represents “common sense,” the bulk of deception research shows that these particular nonverbal cues are not reliable indicators of deception.⁵ A chuckling, fast-talking person who avoids eye contact is just as likely to be telling the truth as is someone who displays the socially accepted signs of sincerity. When tested under controlled laboratory conditions, people rarely are more than 60 percent accurate in their ability to spot deception, while a just-by-chance 50 percent detection rate is more common. It appears that Pat may never know for sure what you did or how you felt on Saturday night.

AN EMERGENT THEORY OF STRATEGIC INTERACTION

David Buller and Judee Burgoon discount the value of highly controlled studies designed to isolate unmistakable cues that people are lying. They agree that human beings are rather poor lie detectors, but they don’t think that the typical one-way communication experiment is a helpful way to explore the reason why. They point out that past research has usually involved people listening to scripted messages recorded by strangers with whom they’ve had no chance to interact. This static approach to deception ignores communication dynamics and focuses instead on internal thought processes—behind-the-eyes explanations for liars’ manipulative behavior or the naïve acceptance of gullible listeners. Buller notes that “rarely is it acknowledged that receivers react to deceivers’ messages and that these reactions alter the communication exchange and, perhaps, deception’s success.”⁶ At the start of the 1990s he proclaimed the need for an *interpersonal deception theory* that would

explain the interplay between active deceivers and detectors who communicate with multiple motives, who behave strategically, whose communication behaviors mutually influence one another to produce a sequence of moves and countermoves, and whose communication is influenced by the situation in which the deception transpires.⁷

Interpersonal deception theory is the result. Figure 7–1 is a paraphrased digest of the 18 propositions that appeared in a 1996 issue of *Communication Theory* dedicated to exploring Buller and Burgoon’s theory. Although the theorists consider their model as “work in progress,” they are committed to a set of unchanging assumptions concerning interpersonal communication in general, and deception in particular. Most of these assumptions surface in their propositions, but two core ideas stand out.

1. Interpersonal communication is interactive. If the encounter between you and Pat actually took place, both of you would be active participants, constantly adjusting your behavior in response to feedback from each other. Whatever story you tell, you shouldn’t expect Pat to remain verbally and nonverbally mute. One way or another, you’ll get a response. In order to capture the reality of two-way communication in flux, I’ve substituted the term *respondent* for the more passive term *listener* in my paraphrase of Buller and Burgoon’s propositions. Interaction, rather than individuality, is at the core of their theory.

2. Strategic deception demands mental effort. A successful deceiver must consciously manipulate information to create a plausible message, present it in a sincere manner, monitor reactions, prepare follow-up responses, and get ready for damage control of a tarnished image—all at the same time. People differ in their ability to deal with these complex mental tasks, but at some point the strategic requirements of deception can produce cognitive overload. If you choose to be less than honest in your surprise encounter with Pat, you may find yourself unable to attend to every aspect of deception, and some of your communication behavior will go on “automatic pilot.” The resulting nonstrategic display is likely to be in the form of nonverbal behavior that you aren’t aware of. Buller and Burgoon adopt the term *leakage* to refer to unconscious nonverbal cues that signal an internal state.⁸ Over half of their 18 propositions involve the important distinction between strategic and nonstrategic activity.

I urge you to make a strategic decision to mull over the 18 propositions listed in Figure 7–1. They are the skeletal links of interpersonal deception theory. The theory will come alive for you if you call to mind a deceptive interaction in which

1. What deceivers and respondents think and do varies according to the amount of interactive give-and-take that's possible in the situation.
2. What deceivers and respondents think and do varies according to how well they know and like each other.
3. Deceivers make more strategic moves and leak more nonverbal cues than truth tellers.
4. With increased interaction, deceivers make more strategic moves and display less leakage.
5. Deceivers' and respondents' expectation for honesty (truth bias) is positively linked with interactivity and relational warmth.
6. Deceivers' fear of being caught and the strategic activity that goes with that fear are lower when truth bias is high, and vice versa.
7. Motivation affects strategic activity and leakage. (a) People who deceive for their own self-gain make more strategic moves and display more leakage. (b) The way respondents first react depends on the relative importance of the relationship and their initial suspicion.
8. As relational familiarity increases, deceivers become more afraid of detection, make more strategic moves, and display more leakage.
9. Skilled deceivers appear more believable because they make more strategic moves and display less leakage than unskilled deceivers.

FIGURE 7–1 Propositions of Interpersonal Deception Theory

(Buller and Burgoon, “Interpersonal Deception Theory,” abridged and paraphrased.)

you've played a part, either as deceiver or respondent, and then apply each proposition to that encounter. In the following sections I'll flesh out portions of this bare-bones propositional framework by examining what Buller and Burgoon say about the linguistic strategy of deceivers, their nonstrategic leakage, the suspicious reactions of respondents, and the behavioral adjustments that deceivers make.

MANIPULATING INFORMATION: THE LANGUAGE AND LOOK OF LIARS

At root, deception is accomplished by manipulating information. Whether through falsification, concealment, or equivocation, liars use words to accomplish their ends. As Sir Walter Scott wrote,

O what, a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive!¹⁹

Buller and Burgoon agree, but not necessarily on moral grounds. They judge a deceptive act on the basis of the deceiver's motives, not on the act itself. That

10. A deceiver's perceived credibility is positively linked to interactivity, the respondent's truth bias, and the deceiver's communication skill but goes down to the extent that the deceiver's communication is unexpected.
11. A respondent's accuracy in spotting deception goes down when interactivity, the respondent's truth bias, and the deceiver's communication skill go up. Detection is positively linked to the respondent's listening skills, relational familiarity, and the degree to which the deceiver's communication is unexpected.
12. Respondents' suspicion is apparent in their strategic activity and leakage.
13. Deceivers spot suspicion when it's present. Perception of suspicion increases when a respondent's behavior is unexpected. Any respondent reactions that signal disbelief, doubt, or the need for more information increase the deceiver's perception of suspicion.
14. Real or imagined suspicion increases deceivers' strategic activity and leakage.
15. The way deception and suspicion are displayed within a given interaction changes over time.
16. In deceptive interactions, reciprocity is the most typical pattern of adaptive response.
17. When the conversation is over, the respondent's detection accuracy, judgment of deceiver credibility, and truth bias depend on the deceiver's final strategic moves and leakage as well as the respondent's listening skill and remaining suspicions.
18. When the conversation is over, the deceiver's judgment of success depends on the respondent's final reaction and the deceiver's perception of lasting suspicion.

FIGURE 7–1 (Continued)

evaluation is complicated, however, because every deceptive act has at least three aims—to accomplish a specific task, to establish or maintain a relationship with the respondent, and to “save face,” or sustain the image of one or both parties. The web of words the deceiver weaves has to work on multiple levels.

The language used to achieve a specific task can be as varied as the people who feel a need to deceive. Yet Buller and Burgoon suggest that the interpersonal and identity motivations inherent in deception stimulate a recurring “text” that marks the communication as less than honest. Even though respondents probably won’t spot these signs in the ebb and flow of interaction, the theorists list four message characteristics that reflect strategic intent.

1. Uncertainty and vagueness. If you don’t want Pat to know about Saturday night, you’ll probably keep your answer short and noncommittal. If you say, “I worked late,” the brevity precludes detail and there’s nothing concrete for Pat to challenge. Another typical way to not be pinned down is to speak in the passive voice and use indefinite pronouns (“It was impossible to get things done before then”).

2. Nonimmediacy, reticence, and withdrawal. If Pat shows up unexpectedly and demands to know why you weren’t in last night, you’ll probably wish you weren’t there now. That desire to be out of the situation is often encoded in non-verbal actions. You might turn away to make coffee, sit farther apart than usual, or lean back rather than forward as you answer. We should expect a moment of silence before you answer, and frequent pauses during your response would be common. Words also show nonimmediacy when the speaker changes verbs from present to past tense—a linguistic move that says in effect, “I’m history.”

3. Disassociation. While nonimmediacy is a strategy of symbolically removing yourself from the situation, disassociation is a way of distancing yourself from what you’ve done. If you talk about your Saturday night date, you are liable to choose language that shifts much of the responsibility to others. *Levelers* are inclusive terms that do this by removing individual choice (“But Pat, everyone always goes out on Saturday night”). *Group references* also suggest shared responsibility (“We all went over to Holly’s party together”). *Modifiers* downplay the intensity of unwelcome news (“Sometimes I get kinda lonely staying home on Saturday night”). All of these linguistic constructions sever the personal connection between the actor and the act of deception.

4. Image- and relationship-protecting behavior. When people “practice to deceive,” they usually recognize that nonverbal leakage could provide telltale signs that the words they speak aren’t what they know to be true. Since discovery could hurt their reputations and threaten their relationships, they consciously strive to suppress the bodily cues that might signal deception. To mask the cues that leak out despite their best efforts, they try to appear extra sincere. Deceivers in dialogue tend to nod in agreement when the respondent speaks, avoid interrupting, and smile frequently. As Buller and Burgoon note, “It appears that smiling may be a simple, all-purpose strategy enacted to cover up deceit.”¹⁰ Jim Carrey’s grinning presence in the film *Liar, Liar* epitomizes this typical diversionary tactic.

Those who desire a clear-cut way to separate truth telling from deception might hope that these four telltale signs of strategic messages would provide an either/or litmus test for discerning honesty. But the world of interpersonal communication is not that simple. Almost *all* communication is intentional, goal directed, and mindful. According to Proposition 3, deceptive communication is simply more so.

Five of Buller and Burgoon's propositions show that multiple factors strongly affect the extent of a deceiver's strategic behavior. They claim that this plan-based activity increases when the situation is highly interactive (Prop. 4), when the parties know each other well (Prop. 8), when the deceiver particularly fears discovery (Prop. 6), when the deceiver's motivation is selfish (Prop. 7), and when the deceiver has good communication skills (Prop. 9). It's not a stretch to think that all five of these intensifying factors will come into play if you decide to conceal, equivocate, or falsify. If you do, your mind will be whirling.

Buller and Burgoon firmly believe that strategic moves aid successful deception. Yet even with all the high-intensity cognitive effort you might bring to the encounter, there's no guarantee that you'll pull it off. Interpersonal deception theory suggests that the outcome depends not only on the quality of your message but also on the nonstrategic cues you can't control.

LEAKAGE: THE TRUTH WILL COME OUT (MAYBE)

A century ago, psychiatric pioneer Sigmund Freud stated the case for using non-verbal cues to detect deception. Referring to a patient who wouldn't be truthful about his darkest thoughts and feelings, Freud observed, "If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore."¹¹ Buller and Burgoon agree that behavior outside of the deceiver's conscious control can signal dishonesty, and they basically endorse the well-known four-factor model of deception developed by University of Rochester social psychologist Miron Zuckerman to explain why this leakage occurs.¹²

First, deceivers' intense *attempt to control* information can produce performances that come across as too slick, or "canned." Nonstrategic information leaks usually go hand-in-hand with strategic activity. Second, lying causes physiological *arousal*. That's why a polygraph, which measures only autonomic responses, is called a "lie detector." Third, the predominant *felt emotions* that accompany deceit are guilt and anxiety. Although "duping delight" is always a possibility, most people feel bad about lying and are likely to show it. Finally, the complex *cognitive factors* involved in deception can tax the brain beyond its capacity. Cognitive overload means some behaviors go unintended.

In a statistical procedure called *meta-analysis*, Zuckerman combined the results of 35 different leakage studies conducted by various researchers to see what unintentional nonverbal behaviors usually accompany deception.¹³ Freud's drumming fingers made the list as part of a category called "self adapters"—fidgety hand movements unrelated to what is said. Other telltale signs were

- Increased blinking and enlarged pupils
- Frequent speech errors (grammatical mistakes, repetitions, slips of the tongue)

- Increased speech hesitations (awkward pauses, “ahs, ers, ums”)
- Higher voice pitch
- Increased discrepancies between verbal and nonverbal channels

Note that smiling and other facial expressions didn’t make the list. As University of Virginia social psychologist Bella DePaulo states, “Facial cues . . . are indeed faking cues.”¹⁴ Apparently most of us are aware of our face’s capacity to convey complex messages, and therefore we strategically monitor and control that display far more than we do our tone of voice or body movement.

Buller and Burgoon contribute to the discussion of leakage by moving beyond a concern with micro-behaviors and focusing on the decline of the deceiver’s overall performance. Reflective of Burgoon’s work with expectancy violations (see Chapter 6), the theorists claim that an unexpected move signals that something is wrong. As Propositions 4, 9, and 10 suggest, a skilled communicator operating in an interactive context has a better chance of crafting a deceptive performance that won’t seem strange. But ultimately, the ability of the deceiver to “pull off” the deception depends on how suspicious the respondent actually is.

THE RESPONDENT’S DILEMMA: TRUTH BIAS OR SUSPICION?

Five of Buller and Burgoon’s propositions refer to our persistent expectation that people will tell the truth (#s 5, 6, 10, 11, 16). This was first labeled a “truth bias” by communication researchers Steven McCornack (Michigan State University) and Malcolm Parks (University of Washington),¹⁵ and Burgoon and Buller have confirmed that respondents tend to regard interpersonal messages as honest, complete, direct, relevant, and clear—even when the speaker is lying.¹⁶ So no matter what you might say about Saturday night, Pat probably will believe you.

Why are people so easily fooled? Following the lead of social philosopher H. P. Grice, McCornack claims that there exists an implied *social contract* that all of us will be honest with each other—a mutual agreement that our messages will reflect reality as we know it. Since deception voids that contract, it’s hard for us to believe that people will casually plunge us into social chaos.¹⁷ Other deception researchers suggest that the expectation of honesty is a *cognitive heuristic*, a mental shortcut used to bypass the huge clutter of verbal and nonverbal signals that bombard us throughout every conversation. Unless deception is obvious from the start, we “seize and freeze” on early signs of sincerity and effectively seal ourselves off from conflicting indicators. Whatever the reason for our assumption of veracity, Buller and Burgoon are convinced that people who know and like each other are particularly resistant to doubting each others’ words. The theorists suggest that parties in close, warm relationships are motivated to find truth in whatever a friend, romantic partner, or family member says. They therefore overlook or explain away statements that others might find questionable.¹⁸

Despite a powerful and prevailing truth bias in face-to-face interaction, people can come to doubt the honesty of another’s words. Pat may well be suspicious of what you say. Buller and Burgoon define *suspicion* as a “state of doubt or dis-

trust that is held without sufficient evidence or proof.”¹⁹ As such, they picture suspicion as a midrange mindset located somewhere between truth and falsity:

TRUE _____ SUSPICION _____ FALSE

We’ve already looked at the strategic and nonstrategic behavior of deceivers that might cause others to become suspicious. Verbal tactics of vagueness, nonimmediacy, and disassociation can make respondents wary; nonverbal signs of emotional stress and mental meltdown may put listeners on guard. In fact, any communication that strikes respondents as strange or out of character is liable to trigger misgivings about the message or the messenger. Of course, some suspicions may be planted before the interaction even begins. From past experience, Pat may know that you aren’t always truthful. Certainly Pat’s jealousy will create a built-in skepticism toward any explanation you might offer. Or a prior warning from a third party could taint the whole interaction.

Given the many ways that respondents could become suspicious, we might imagine that deceivers would lose their truth-bias advantage and have their deception unmasked for what it is. Not so. Buller and Burgoon have found that it’s actually difficult to induce a deep-seated skepticism.²⁰ On the rare occasions when respondents are highly suspicious, their doubts usually diminish after a few minutes of interaction.

When respondents doubt a deceiver’s honesty, they tend to avoid direct confrontation in order to hide their suspicions. Instead, they adopt “a take charge interview style but one that is conducted under a pleasant guise.”²¹ Smiling often, they gently probe for more information rather than directly challenging the deceiver’s statements. Buller and Burgoon have discovered scant evidence that these probes help respondents unmask deception. On the contrary, the theorists find that throughout the interaction, respondents are “oblivious to, or accepting of, sender deceit and may even assist, wittingly or unwittingly, in its creation.”²² Even though Buller and Burgoon’s empirical commitment contrasts sharply with Pearce and Cronen’s interpretive stance (see Chapter 5), interpersonal deception theory and CMM reach a common conclusion—namely, that persons-in-conversation co-construct their own social realities. This construction project continues as the deceiver reacts to the respondent’s suspicions.

PUTTING DOUBTS TO REST: DECEIVER ADJUSTMENT TO SUSPICION

In the early stages of her work on interpersonal deception, Judee Burgoon stated that researchers should view deception as a “chain of offensive and defensive maneuvers on the part of both participants.”²³ Propositions 12–18 describe the ongoing interaction in that adversarial “game.” Just as unexpected words and nonverbal leakage reveal the strategic thinking and emotional stress that accompany deception, respondents’ suspicions can be seen through their own nontypical behaviors—even when they try to appear natural. The deception game isn’t balanced, however. Unlike truth-bias players who don’t even know they are playing,

deceivers always know the name of the game, and they usually have more to lose if they fail. With this heightened motivation, deceivers are more successful at sensing suspicion than respondents are at spotting deception. Not surprisingly, as soon as deceivers see signs of doubt, they change their behavior in a way intended to alleviate their partner's distrust. According to Buller and Burgoon, they often reciprocate the mood and manner of the person they are trying to mislead.

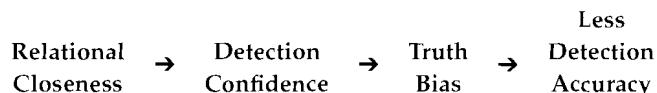
Reciprocation is a process of adjusting communication behavior to mesh with the style of the other. When the respondent shows high involvement through animated speech and forward body lean, the deceiver becomes similarly engaged. On the other hand, deceivers can match a nonchalant style with their own laid-back approach. A strong accusation can be countered with an angry retort, a pleasant query answered with a warm smile. Thus, deceivers whose initial words are met with skepticism show more variety in their communication behavior than do those who face apparent acceptance.

Truth tellers react the same way. When falsely accused or confronted by suspicion, they try to tailor messages that will remove all doubt. But in the context of suspected deception, their adaptation may strike the respondent as devious—a self-fulfilling prophecy labeled the “Othello error.”²⁴ It’s an apt reference to the Moorish king’s unfounded fear of Desdemona’s unfaithfulness, an escalating obsession that ended in tragedy. Although most suspicions don’t have the consequences of a Shakespearean tragedy, the Bard’s play depicts a “recursive spiral of sender and receiver cognitions influencing behaviors and subsequent cognitions during an interaction.”²⁵ Buller and Burgoon think this pattern is typical of most interpersonal interactions where honesty is an issue. Their theory explains why detection of deception (and detection of truth telling) is a hit-and-miss business. If you decide to lie about Saturday night, Pat may well be fooled. If you decide to tell the truth, Pat may not believe you. Interpersonal deception theory explains why.

CRITIQUE: WHY DOES IT HAVE TO BE SO COMPLICATED?

David Buller and Judee Burgoon have created a theory that offers multiple explanations for what takes place during deceptive communication. Interactive contexts, strategic manipulation of language, nonverbal leakage, truth biases, suspicious probes, and behavioral adaptation are just a few of the explanatory concepts they use to capture the dynamics of deception. To some observers, interpersonal deception theory looks like the mousetrap pictured in Chapter 3. Since relative simplicity is the mark of a high-quality scientific theory, isn’t it reasonable to expect this one to be less complex?

Other deception theories with a narrower focus are definitely more concise. For example, I was able to explain Zuckerman’s four-factor model of nonverbal leakage in a few paragraphs. Steven McCornack offers an equally simple model of deception that has direct causal links:²⁶



The question is whether simple constructions can reflect the complexity of real-life deceptive give-and-take. Buller and Burgoon are convinced that they can't. They insist that deception is essentially a *communication* activity so that theory and research about it must take into account all the intricacies of face-to-face interaction.²⁷

While not denying that Buller and Burgoon capture much of that complexity in their 18 propositions, University of Virginia psychologist Bella DePaulo and her colleagues fail to spot an explanatory glue that binds them together:

We cannot find the “why” question in Buller and Burgoon’s synthesis. There is no intriguing riddle or puzzle that needs to be solved, and no central explanatory mechanism is ever described. With no conceptual motor to drive their synthesis, there is also no new understanding.²⁸

Since a social science theory should *explain* as well as *describe*, these critics question whether interpersonal deception theory is really a theory at all.

In response to this criticism, Buller and Burgoon argue that the theory *does* explain—that they offer *multiple* mechanisms to link the many variables that affect interpersonal deception. They suggest that *expectancy violations* could be the unifying factor in the theory (see Chapter 6). Expectancy violations would explain how people recognize deception—a respondent becomes suspicious when the deceiver begins to act in a strange way.²⁹ But since only a few of the theory’s propositions refer to expectancy violations, the unity (and status) of the theory remains in question.

For me, the power of interpersonal deception theory is found in its practical advice. *When talking with others, we should doubt our ability to detect deception.* Most of us think we are great lie detectors. But because deceivers have the chance to adjust their communication in a way that will alleviate our suspicions, we really aren’t. Once we no longer assume that we have an uncanny knack for ferreting out the truth, we decrease the danger of making snap judgments that do violence to others. I once heard a macho teenager boast that he could tell whether a girl was a virgin by looking into her eyes, regardless of what she said. That’s the kind of arrogance that could easily besmirch a reputation.

Even when we understand that falsification, concealment, and equivocation are interpersonal facts of life, it still may make sense to maintain our truth bias. We usually want others to be honest with us, and self-fulfilling prophecy is a strong dynamic in any conversation. People who expect honesty from others have a better chance of getting it than do those who doubt everything that’s said. Instead of acting like the suspicious father played by Robert DeNiro in *Meet the Parents* and *Meet the Fockers*, I’d rather be a person who “believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”³⁰ Until such time that I run across solid evidence that another person is trying to deceive me, I prefer to relax and enjoy our conversations.

To summarize, interpersonal deception theory underscores the complexity of deception when people talk and respond to each other face-to-face. It’s hard to know for sure when someone isn’t telling the truth. But before the difficulty of detection prompts you to lie to Pat—or anyone else, for that matter—consider the thoughts in the brief ethical reflections that follow this chapter. Buller and Burgoon may be silent about the morality of deception; ethical theorists are not.

QUESTIONS TO SHARPEN YOUR FOCUS

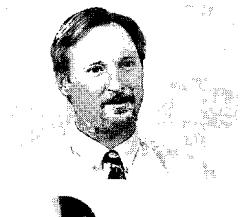
1. In an *interactive context*, what *linguistic features* of the message and *nonverbal signs* of *leakage* in the messenger are probable indicators of deception?
2. Which of the 18 propositions paraphrased in Figure 7-1 clearly show that interpersonal deception theory has a *cognitive explanation* for *communication behavior* during deception?
3. Buller and Burgoon claim that accurate detection of deception is difficult, yet most people knew Bill Clinton was lying about Monica Lewinsky long before he confessed. How would the authors explain this apparent contradiction?
4. What deceptive *strategy* would you use if you decided not to tell the truth to a close friend or relative—*falsification, concealment, or equivocation*? Which strategy is most likely to seem unexpected or strange? Why?

SELF-QUIZ



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CONVERSATIONS



In my conversation with David Buller, I explore three issues that I find fascinating. I start by asking Buller about deception in friendship and marriage. Do partners in close relationships have an advantage in detecting deception? I then explore a possible connection between Buller's theory and his personal stance on the ethics of deception. Does he make ethical judgments based on the morality of the act, the consequences that it has, or the motives of the deceiver? Finally, I ask Buller to talk about his research results. Has he had a "gee-whiz" finding regarding deception that surprised or even shocked him?



View this segment on the book's CD.

A SECOND LOOK

Recommended resource: David B. Buller and Judee K. Burgoon, "Interpersonal Deception Theory," *Communication Theory*, Vol. 6, 1996, pp. 203–242.

Summary of research: Judee K. Burgoon and David B. Buller, "Interpersonal Deception Theory," in *Perspective on Persuasion, Social Influence, and Compliance Gaining*, John Seiter and Robert Gass (eds.), Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 2003, pp. 239–264.

Empirical test of interactivity principle: Judee K. Burgoon, David B. Buller, and Kory Floyd, "Does Participation Affect Deception Success?" *Human Communication Research*, Vol. 27, 2001, pp. 503–534.

Truth versus deception—differences in message content: Judee K. Burgoon, David B. Buller, Laura K. Guerrero, Walid Afifi, and Clyde Feldman, "Interpersonal Deception: XII. Information Management Dimensions Underlying Deceptive and Truthful Messages," *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 63, 1996, pp. 50–69.

Suspicion of deceit: Judee K. Burgoon, David B. Buller, Amy S. Ebisu, Cindy H. White, and Patricia A. Rockwell, "Testing Interpersonal Deception Theory: Effects of Suspicion on Communication Behaviors and Perceptions," *Communication Theory*, Vol. 6, 1996, pp. 243–267.

Leakage cues: Judee K. Burgoon, "Measuring Nonverbal Indicators of Deceit," in *The Sourcebook of Nonverbal Measures: Going Beyond Words*, Valerie Manusov (ed.), Lawrence Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ, 2005, pp. 237–250.

Behavioral adaptation during deception: Judee K. Burgoon, David B. Buller, Cindy H. White, Walid Afifi, and Aileen Buslig, "The Role of Conversational Involvement in Deceptive Interpersonal Interactions," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 25, 1999, pp. 669–685.

Practical implications of deception research: Pamela J. Kalbfleisch, "Deceit, Distrust and the Social Milieu: Application of Deception Research in a Troubled World," *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Vol. 20, 1992, pp. 308–334.

Alternative theory: Steven McCornack, "Information Manipulation Theory," *Communication Monographs*, Vol. 59, 1992, pp. 1–16.

Critique: Bella M. DePaulo, Matthew Ansfield, and Kathy L. Bell, "Theories About Deception and Paradigms for Studying It: A Critical Appraisal of Buller and Burgoon's Interpersonal Deception Theory and Research," *Communication Theory*, Vol. 6, 1996, pp. 297–310.

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