

Bill & Monica: Sex, Lies & Videotape

Identity, Agency & Environment



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Teaching:

- Undergraduate Research Methods and Statistics
- Coding and Data Science (R, Python, MatLab)
- Psychology & Law (3rd Year Elective)
- MSc Forensic Psychology
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My Perspective

My area of interest is ‘Social Cognition’ or how we think about the social world around us, perceive ourselves and those around us as social agents, and deploy interpersonal behaviours within our environment.

I subscribe to the 4E Cognitive Science model, specifically that we are not separate brains in separate jars, but rather



Embodied

- Cognition is rooted in the body's interactions with the world.

Embedded

- Cognition is deeply influenced by the environment in which it occurs.

Enacted

- Cognition emerges through action and dynamic interaction with the environment.

Extended

- Cognitive processes can extend beyond the brain and body to include tools and technologies.



But we will return to that shortly...

As a deception researcher, I spend a great deal of time thinking about ‘Truth’



“Data is the new oil”



A Post-Truth Era?

- **Emotion versus Evidence**
 - Truth wrestles with feelings and beliefs.
 - Social media algorithms amplified biases and emotional content.
- **Fragmentation of Reality**
 - Echo chambers and “alternative facts” polarise perceptions of truth.



Truthiness: When It Feels True

- **Gut Over Fact**

- Coined by Stephen Colbert, “truthiness” refers to beliefs that “feel” true without factual basis.
- Charisma and narrative outweigh evidence.

- **Superficial Authenticity**

- ‘Truth’ becomes a matter of personal resonance, not universal agreement.



Where Are We REALLY Now?

- **Hybrid Reality**

- The battle between evidence-based truths and emotionally driven narratives continues.
- Trust in institutions, expertise and ‘the old rules’ is fragile.

- **The Path Forward**

- Promoting media/data literacy and critical thinking.
- Balancing facts with empathy to rebuild shared realities.



Let's travel back in time... to 1998



The Information Explosion: The 24-Hour News Cycle

- **Rise of Mass Media**

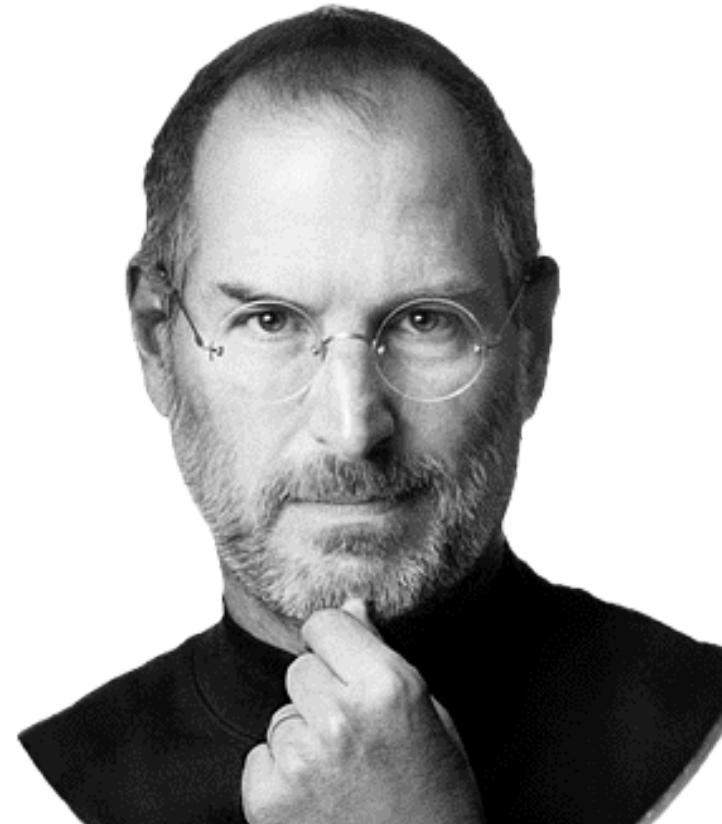
- Late 20th century: Television, cable news, and eventually the internet democratized information.
- Facts became widely accessible, but so did misinformation.

- **Information Overload**

- Audiences struggled to process and evaluate the growing flood of data.
- Trust in institutions began to erode under competing narratives.



The term “**Reality Distortion Field**” (**RDF**) is a phrase to describe **Steve Jobs**’ ability to convince himself and others to believe in almost anything, even in the face of impossible odds or evidence to the contrary.



The Reality Distortion Field refers to Jobs’ combination of **charisma, passion, persuasion, and vision** that made him an irresistible force, but somewhat distasteful to the modern eye despite his achievements.



The Biggest lie ever told



The Incident:

- In January 1998, Bill Clinton, then-President of the United States, famously made the ‘Clinton Denial’
- The statement was in response to allegations of an *extramarital affair* with Monica Lewinsky, a 22 year-old White House intern.

Became widely known as the “Lewinsky Scandal”

- **Key Context:**
 - **Impeachment Risk:** The statement became pivotal in the investigation led by Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, which aimed to uncover misconduct by Clinton.
 - **Perjury Accusation:** Clinton’s denial under oath led to accusations of perjury, which formed the basis for his later impeachment by the House of Representatives.



The Political Climate:

- **1990s Partisan Divide:** The U.S. political landscape was deeply polarized, with Republicans seeking to capitalize on Clinton's vulnerabilities.
- **Moral Conservatism:** The 1990s were marked by a strong focus on personal morality in politics, with high public scrutiny of politicians' private lives.
- **Cultural Change:** The rise of 24-hour news cycles and tabloids (e.g., *Drudge Report*) amplified scandals and created a media frenzy.



Impact on Public Opinion:

- While the scandal shocked many, Clinton's approval ratings remained high, as the public often separated his personal behavior from his political performance.
- Many viewed the investigation as excessively partisan, fueling debates about privacy and accountability in public office.



Context and Setting

- Press conference about after-school care
- Impromptu denial tacked on at end
- High stakes political environment
- Media presence and cameras



The Impact of the ‘Clinton Scandal’ on Monica Lewinsky

1. Power Imbalance:

- As a young intern, she was vulnerable to the dynamics of authority and trust in the workplace.

2. Public Shaming and Media Exploitation:

- Relentless media coverage turned her into a caricature, stripping her of dignity and agency.
- Misogyny amplified the scrutiny, with her bearing the brunt of societal blame.



The Impact of the ‘Clinton Scandal’ on Monica Lewinsky 2

3. Societal Judgment and Stigma:

- She became a symbol of scandal, enduring widespread slut-shaming and societal alienation.
- Her name was unfairly reduced to a single event, erasing her complexity as a person.

4. Psychological and Emotional Impact:

- The betrayal, humiliation, and loss of privacy caused deep emotional trauma.
- She faced depression and suicidal thoughts as a result of the public vilification.



The Impact of the ‘Clinton Scandal’ on Monica Lewinsky 3

5. Professional Consequences:

- The scandal overshadowed her career prospects, leaving her with limited opportunities.

6. Legacy and Redemption:

- While initially treated as a cautionary tale, Lewinsky has since reclaimed her voice, becoming an advocate for anti-bullying and reflecting on the harm of public shaming.



Monica Lewinsky's Perspective on the Clinton Affair

1. Personal Regret and Accountability

- Lewinsky has expressed regret for her involvement, recognizing her actions as influenced by youthful infatuation and emotional needs.

2. Power Imbalance and Consent

- Over time, she has come to see the relationship through the lens of power dynamics, acknowledging the impact of Clinton's authority and her vulnerability.



Monica Lewinsky's Perspective on the Clinton Affair 2

3. Public Shaming and Cyberbullying

- As one of the earliest victims of global public shaming, Lewinsky has highlighted the intense scrutiny she faced and its effects on her mental health, leading her to advocate against cyberbullying.

4. Societal Hypocrisy and Double Standards

- Lewinsky critiques the double standards, noting the harsher judgment she faced compared to Clinton and how society often disproportionately blames women in cases of moral propriety.



Monica Lewinsky's Perspective on the Clinton Affair 3

5. Reclaiming Her Narrative

- Through writing, speaking, and advocacy, Lewinsky has worked to reclaim her story, focusing on resilience and empowering others to overcome public shaming.



The Biggest Lie Ever Told

This Day In History: Bill Clinton says "I did not have sexual relations with that woman"



The Biggest Lie Ever Told

Global Scale and Media Coverage

- The lie reached millions globally, with real-time media coverage and international scrutiny.

Breach of Public Trust

- Clinton's lie as a head of state under oath broke public trust, fostering widespread cynicism toward political leaders.

Legal Repercussions and Impeachment

- Clinton's denial led to charges of perjury and impeachment, a rare and profound consequence.



The Biggest Lie Ever Told

Psychological and Cultural Impact

- The scandal prompted debates on public and private morality, influencing society's view on honesty in leadership.

Iconic Language and Lasting Legacy

- The phrasing became iconic, making it a memorable cultural phenomenon and embedding it in public consciousness.



The impact on Deception Research

The ‘Clinton Denial’ became the Prototype of high-stakes deception.

At the time, media pored over every frame, but the science and the technology was basic

Later ‘ground-truth’ was established. The Blue Gap Cocktail Dress and an admission.

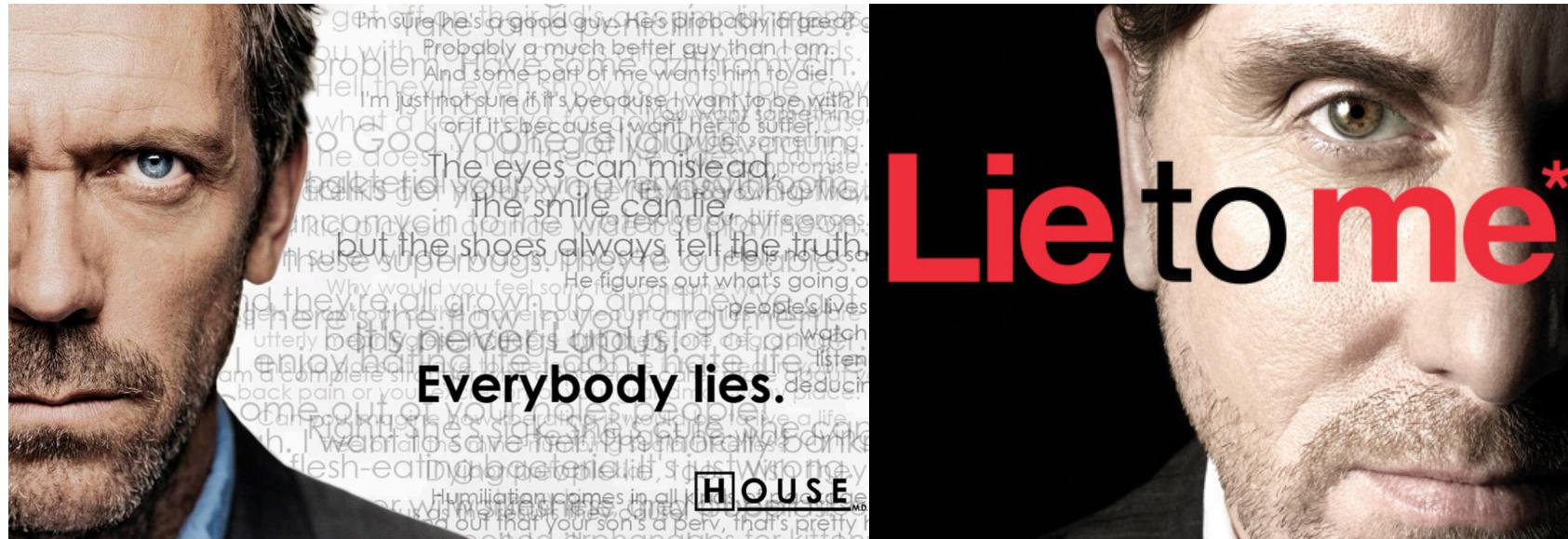
The Clinton Denial became the ‘Touchstone’ for deception detection and case study.



The consequences of 9/11

There was a noticeable increase in funding for anti-deception research in the aftermath of 9/11

To say this was ‘frenzied’ may seem like exaggeration



Illustrative Interpretation:

Clinton's denial can be "read" as a crafted narrative intended to manage his political survival, balancing legal precision with an attempt to appear sincere.

The audience's interpretation depends on the interplay between the words, the delivery, and the cultural expectations of honesty.



Deception overview

- Deception is complex and multifaceted
- Traditional focus on stereotypical nonverbal behaviour is ineffective
- No single ‘Pinocchio’s Nose’ exists
- Need for **multimodal** analysis approach and embracing of contextual complexity



The Clinton Lie: Multimodal Signals



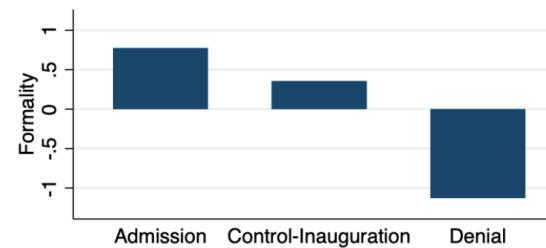
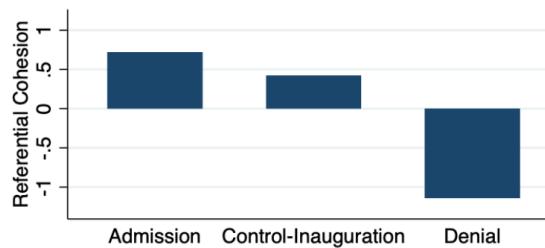
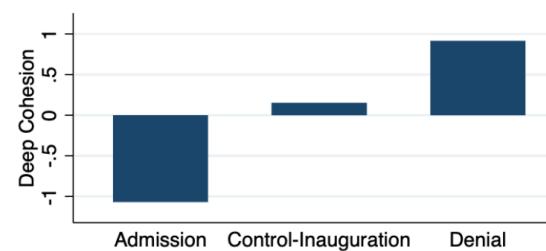
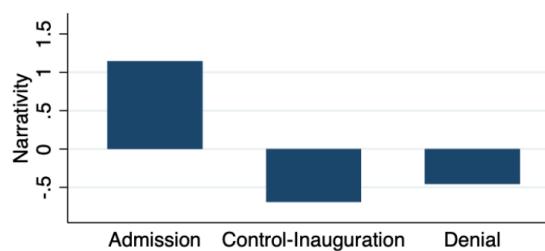
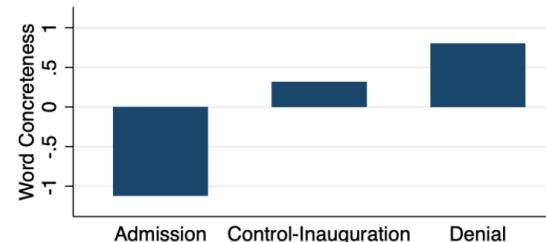
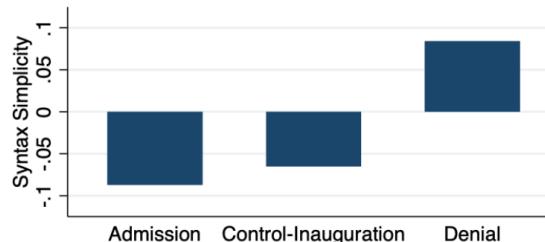
1. Linguistic Dynamics

- Shift from policy language to defensive language
- Use of definitive phrases (“I did not have...”)
- Distancing language (“that woman”)
- Pronoun emphasis (“I never told anybody...”)



Coh-Metrix

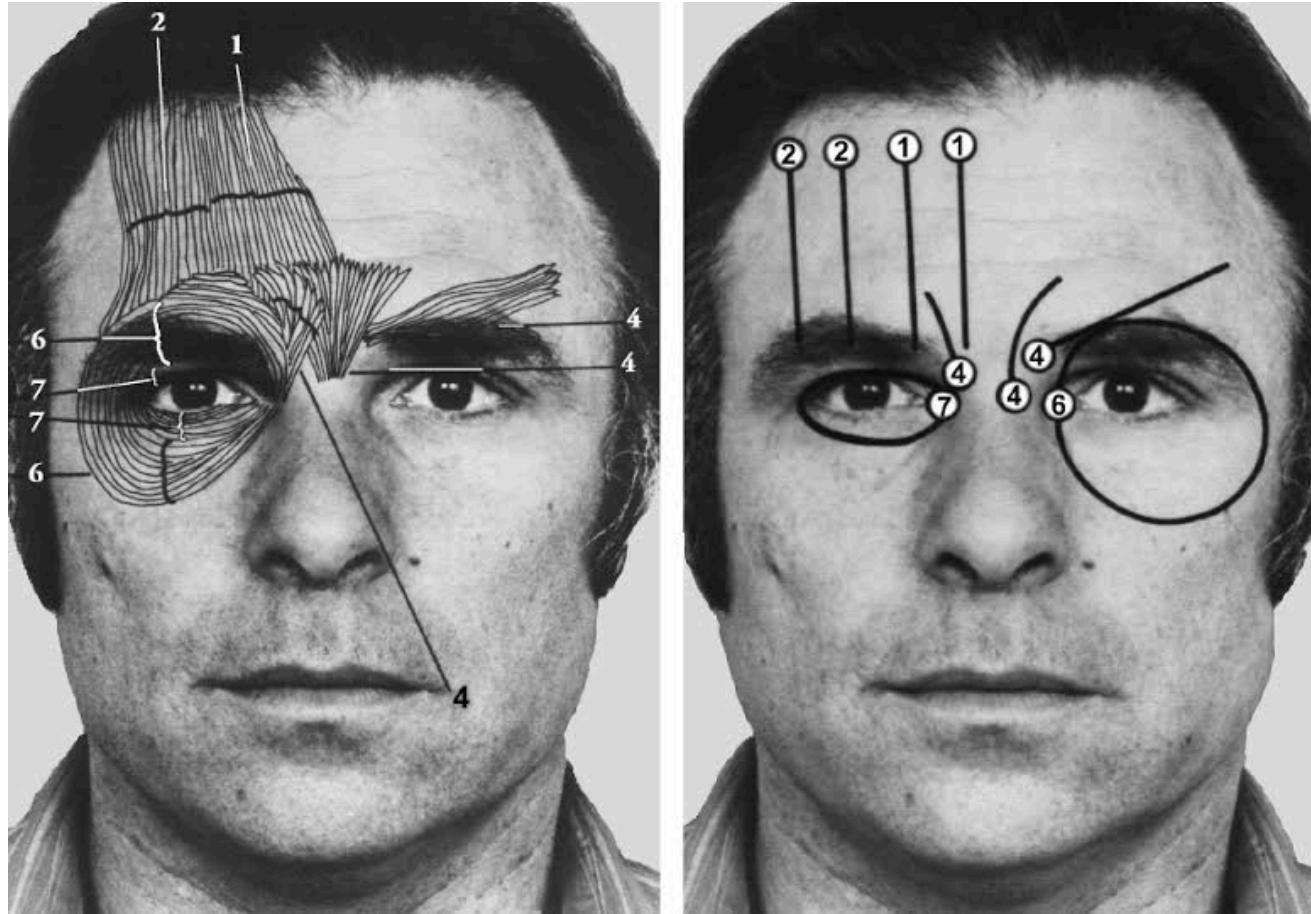
Coh-Metrix is a computational tool designed to analyze the coherence and cohesion of texts. It provides insights into the linguistic, cognitive, and discourse structures of written or spoken text. By leveraging a wide range of metrics, Coh-Metrix helps researchers and educators understand text complexity, readability, and the deeper relationships within language.



Facial Action Coding System

The Facial Action Coding System (FACS) is a system to taxonimize human facial movements based upon their underlying musculature.

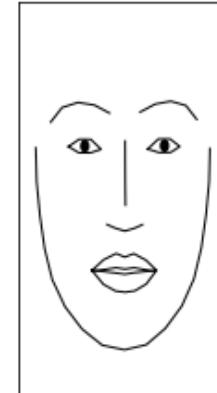
It was first developed by Carl-Herman Hjortsö in 1978 and then popularised and expanded upon by Paul Ekman and Wallace V. Friesen in 2002.



AU01
inner brow raiser



AU02
outer brow raiser



AU04
brow lowerer



AU05
upper lid raiser



AU06
cheek raiser



AU07
lid tightener



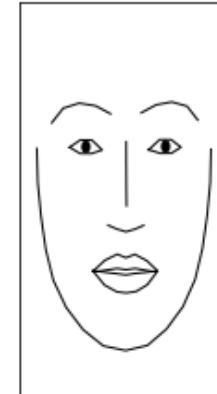
AU09
nose wrinkle



AU10
upper lip raiser



AU11
lip corner puller



AU12
dimpler



AU14
lip corner depressor



AU15
chin raiser



AU17
lip puckerer

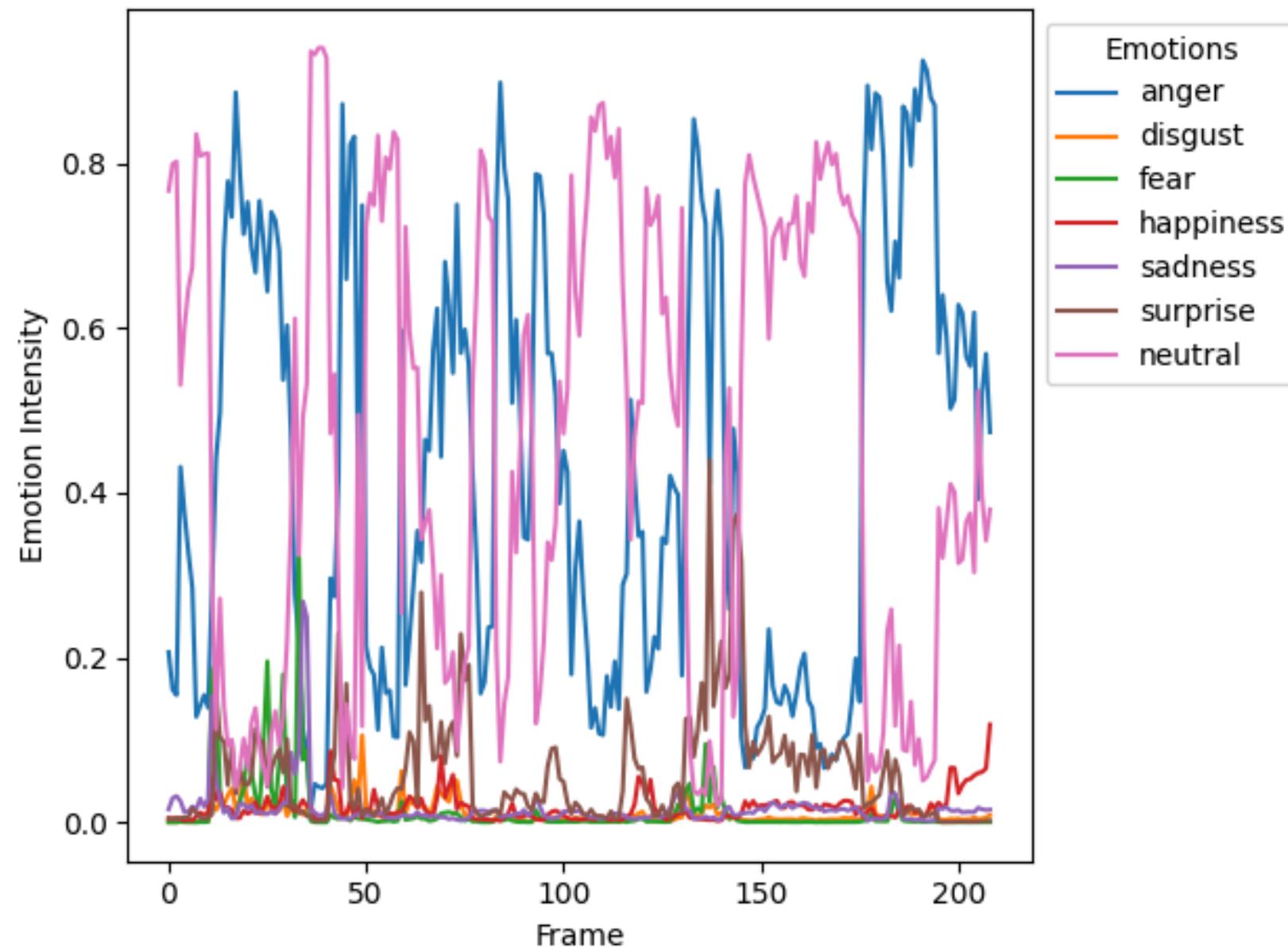


AU20
lip stretcher

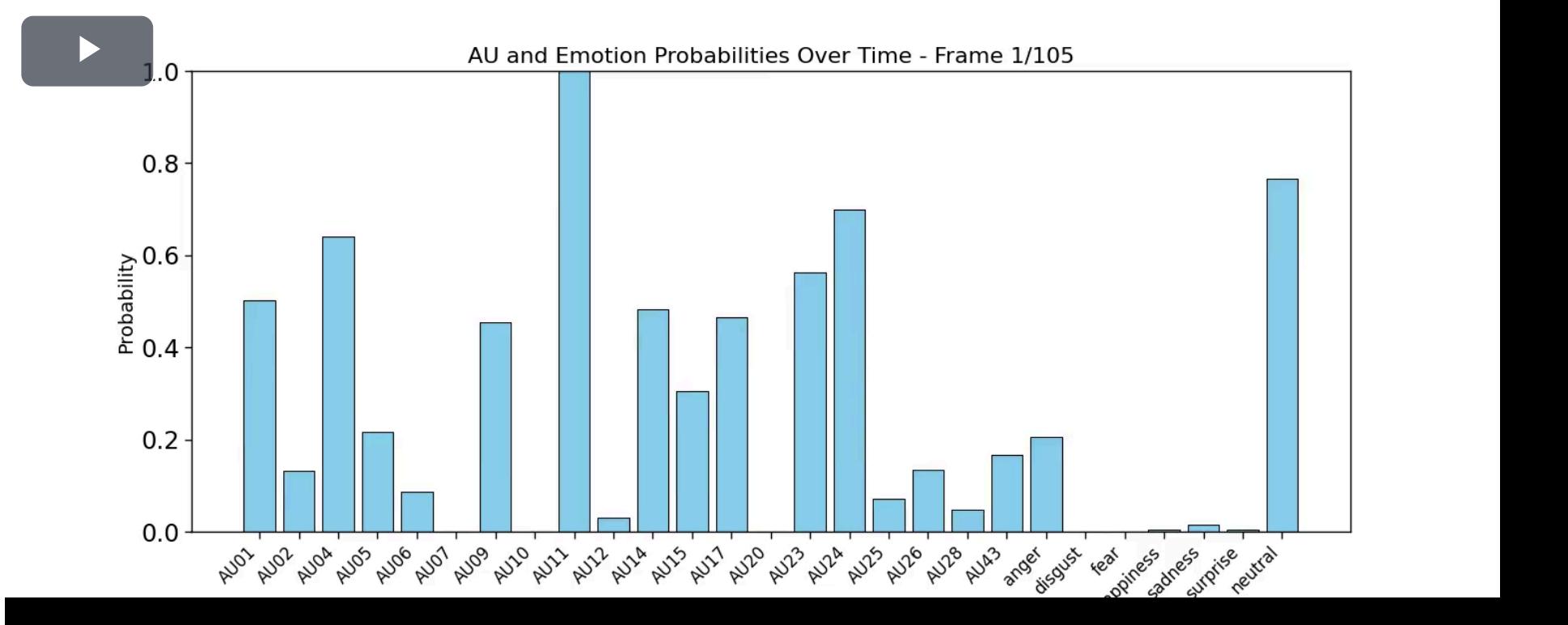


AU23
lip tightener

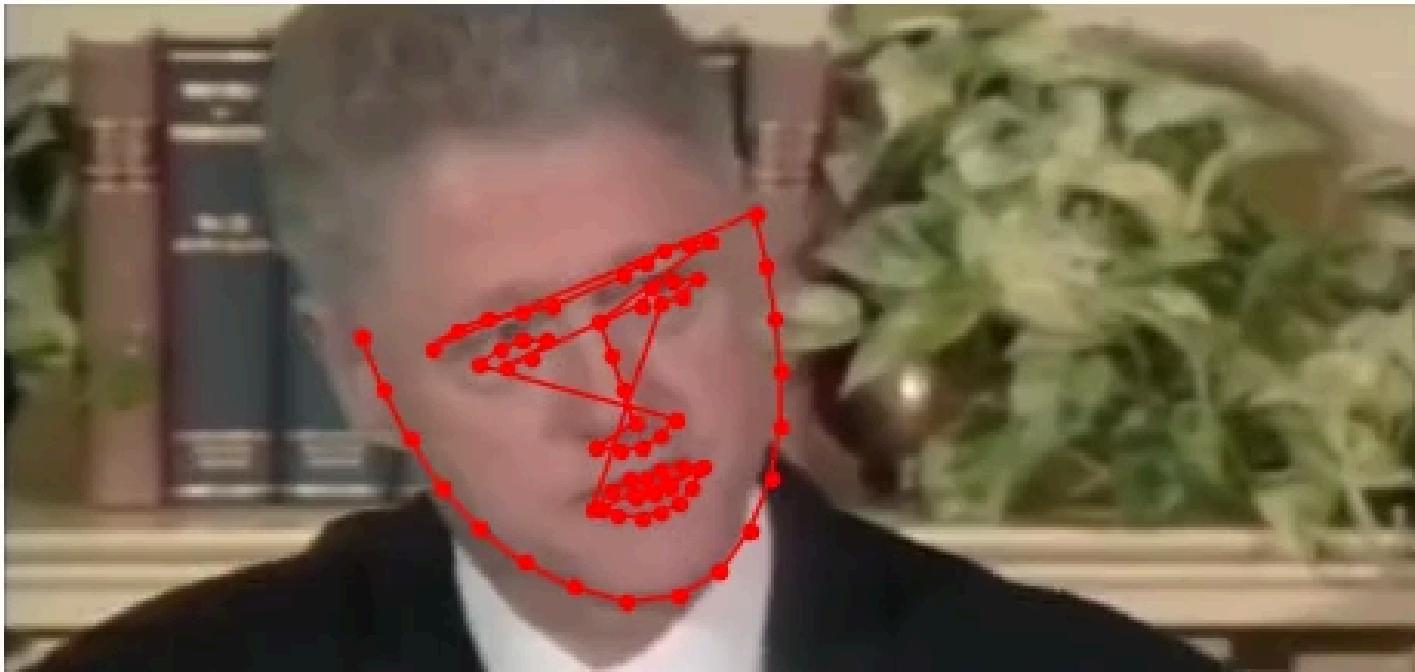




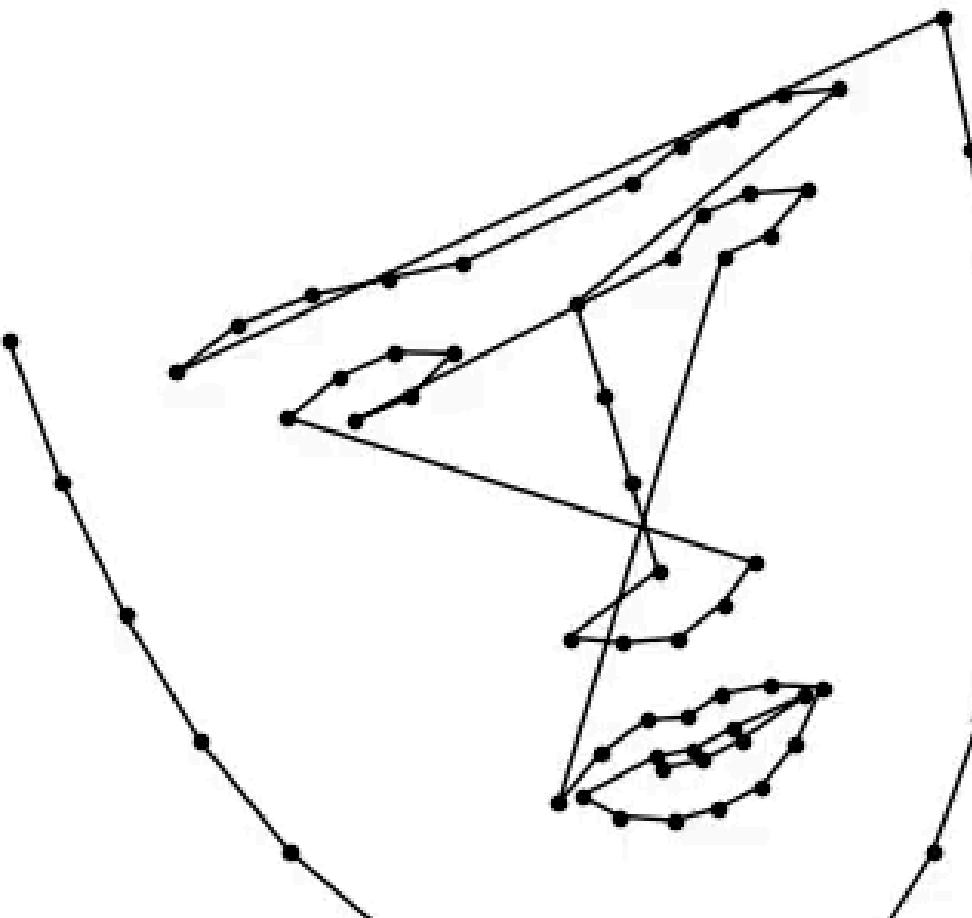
Action Unit Activations (py-feat)



Facial Feature Extraction Overlay (py-feat)



Landmark Animation (py-feat)



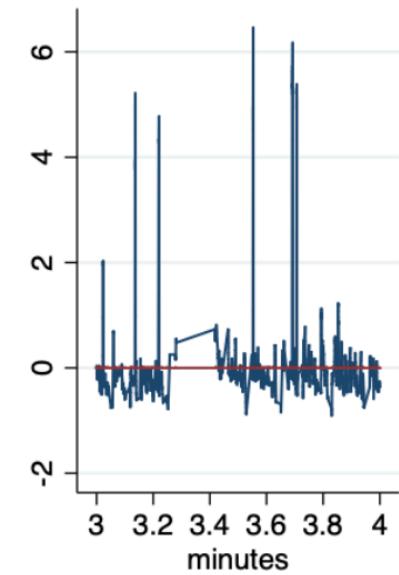
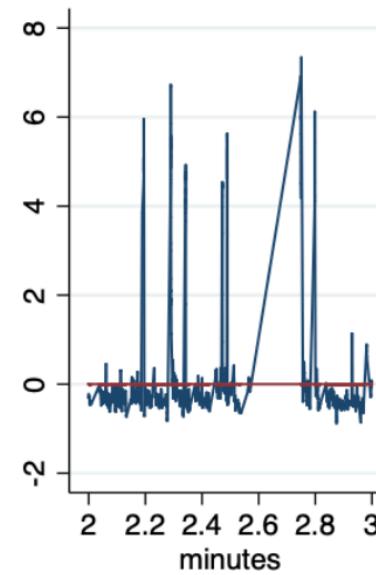
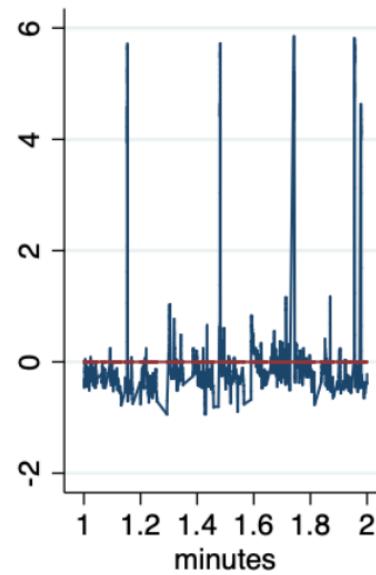
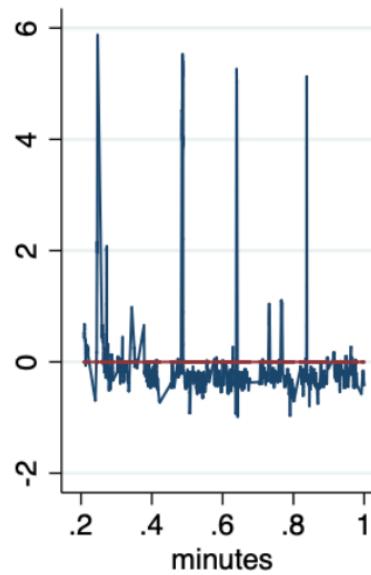
2. Embodied Nonverbal Cues

- Aggressive finger pointing (uncharacteristic gesture)
- Fixed gaze and eye-widening during denial
- Postural changes from policy speech to denial
- Breaking from his usual gestural patterns



3. Acoustic Changes

- Fundamental frequency shifts
- Changes in speech rhythm
- Doubled rate of pitch peaks during denial
- Distinct from baseline speaking pattern



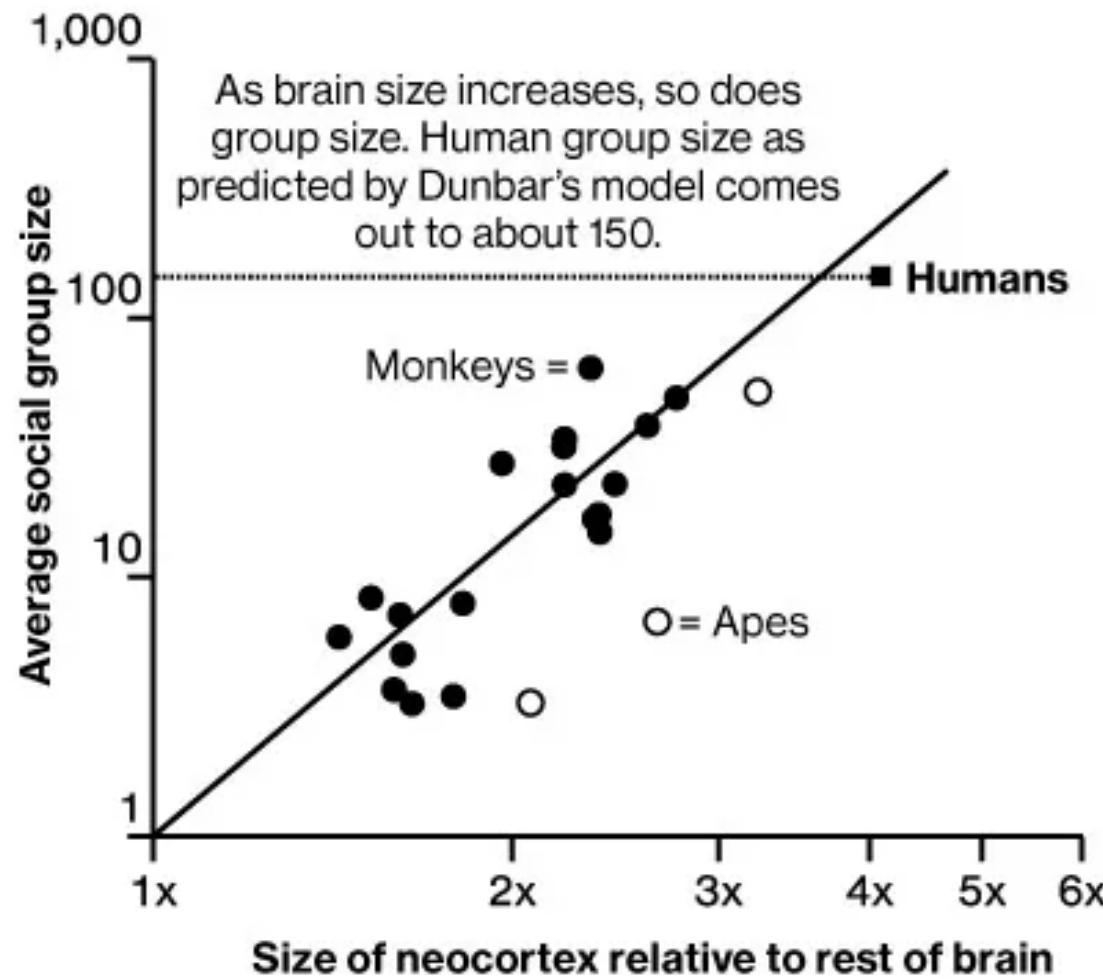
Little Monkey

Natural World - Clever Monkeys (Part 4/6)



Dunbar's Number

The Social Cortex



DATA: THE SOCIAL BRAIN HYPOTHESIS, DUNBAR 1998



The Machiavellian Intelligence Hypothesis

The Machiavellian Intelligence Hypothesis posits that social demands have driven the evolution of the cognitive facilities humans employ to navigate their social domain.

‘Machiavellian’ strategies, such as deception, interpersonal manipulation, cooperation, and alliance formation allow individuals to achieve higher social and reproductive success.



Machiavellian Traits

- Strategic manipulation of appearances
- Skilled management of power dynamics
- Control over social narratives
- Calculated use of context
- Mastery of asymmetrical relationships



But what about ‘normal’ humans?

BBC Horizon - A Week Without Lying

Goldsmiths Link



Types of Lies and Their Frequency

- **Personal Transgression (22%)**: Cover up a mistake or misdeed.
- **Economic Advantage (16%)**: Gain financial benefits through dishonesty.
- **Personal Advantage (15%)**: Secure benefits that are not necessarily financial.
- **Avoidance (14%)**: Escape or evade interactions with other people.
- **Self-Impression (8%)**: Shape a positive image of oneself.
- **Humour (5%)**: Make people laugh, often using exaggerated or fictitious elements.
- **Social or Polite (5%)**: Uphold social roles or avoid rudeness.
- **Altruistic (4%)**: Help someone else by telling a lie.
- **Malicious (2%)**: Intentionally hurt others through deception.
- **Pathological (2%)**: Disregard for reality; habitual lying without clear reason.
- **Unknown (7%)**: Motives are unclear, even to ourselves.



Why Do We Lie?

- **To Protect Yourself:** Many lies are told to avoid negative outcomes for oneself, whether to evade blame or cover up a mistake.
- **To Promote Yourself:** Lies often serve as a means to advance one's interests, whether for economic or personal benefit.
- **To Impact Others:** Lies can also be intended to influence, entertain, or help others, from humour to altruistic deception.



A new type of lie

What about considering the ‘Future-Truth’ - it’s a lie right now, but by the time anyone finds out, it will be the truth!

To what degree is this a normal aspect of self-presentation and ‘growth’?

Fake it ’til you make it?



Bill Clinton as the Prototype Machiavellian

- **Masterful Charm and Charisma**
 - Clinton's charm helped him connect deeply with others, using it as a tool for influence—a core Machiavellian trait.
- **Strategic Adaptability**
 - He showed flexibility in adapting to scandals and challenges, focusing on maintaining control and favorable outcomes.
- **Calculated Risk-Taking**
 - Clinton took high-stakes risks, characteristic of Machiavellians, who weigh costs and benefits to achieve personal success.
- **Political Manipulation and Persuasion**
 - Known for “Clintonian triangulation,” he skillfully built alliances, navigated power dynamics, and appealed to both sides.



Bill Clinton as the Prototype Machiavellian 3

- **Instrumental Rationality**
 - His pragmatic approach prioritized effective outcomes over ethical consistency, focusing on what was politically advantageous.
- **Effective Management of Public Image**
 - Clinton maintained a favorable public image despite controversies, displaying expert self-presentation skills.
- **Boundary Between Public and Private Morality**
 - Demonstrating psychological compartmentalization, he separated personal actions from his public role, a typical Machiavellian characteristic.

The Five Factor Machiavellian Inventory Dimensions

Antagonism - Represents traits associated with hostility, selfishness, and disregard for others. It includes behaviors like manipulation, callousness, immorality, and cynicism. Antagonistic individuals prioritize their own needs and goals, often at the expense of others, and may lack empathy or compassion.

Agency - Refers to traits related to ambition, self-confidence, and assertiveness. High agency reflects a strong sense of competence and

