

The Economic and Interpersonal Consequences of Deflecting Direct Questions

T. Bradford Bitterly, Maurice E. Schweitzer

Wharton School

Abstract

Direct, difficult questions (e.g., Do you have other offers? How much did you make in your prior job?) pose a challenge. Respondents may incur economic costs for honestly revealing information, reputational costs for engaging in deception, and interpersonal costs, including harm to perceptions of trust and likability, for directly declining to answer the question (e.g., I would rather not answer that question.). Across four experiments, we explore the relative economic and interpersonal consequences of a fourth approach: Deflection, answering a direct question with another question. We contrast deflection with other types of responses and show that deflection can mitigate the economic costs of honest answers, the reputational costs of engaging in deception, and the interpersonal costs of directly declining to answer a question. Paradoxically, deflection works by invoking the same Gricean norm, the norm of answering a direction question that deflection violates.

Keywords: Deflection; Trust; Deception; Negotiation; Disclosure

The Economic and Interpersonal Consequences of Deflecting Direct Questions

Across domains, from job interviews to negotiations to dates, individuals are frequently asked sensitive questions that they would prefer not to answer. For example, during an interview, a female job candidate might be asked when she plans to have children or what she was paid in her prior position. Although these types of questions are uncomfortable and sometimes illegal, how an individual responds can influence both economic outcomes and interpersonal perceptions. Similarly, in negotiations individuals are routinely asked direct questions (e.g., “How much can you spend?”) about information they would rather conceal (Van Beest, Steinel, & Murnighan, 2011; Steinel, De Dreu, Ouwehand, Ramírez-Marín, 2009). How negotiators respond can directly influence their economic and interpersonal outcomes.

Recent research has begun to explore the costs and benefits of different types of responses to difficult and direct questions (John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016; Rogers & Norton, 2011; Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, & Schweitzer; 2017). This work identifies a number of potential responses. Respondents could honestly reveal costly information (e.g., “I plan to have children in my first year on the job”); they could decline to answer the question and risk harming interpersonal perceptions of trust and likability (e.g., “I would rather not answer that question.” John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016), or they could respond with misleading statements and risk detection and damage to the long-term relationship (e.g., “I do not have any plans to have children.”; Rogers & Norton, 2011; Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, & Schweitzer; 2017).

In this research, we explore a fourth option: Deflection. We define deflection as responding to a direct question with a question that shifts the topic of the conversation away from the specific topic of the original question. Effective deflections shift the focus of the conversation away from the original question. This shift is important and distinguishes deflection

from other types of question responses, such as asking a clarifying question. We also contrast deflection with other types of responses. Specifically, rather than decline to answer the question at an interpersonal cost (e.g., risk being perceived as less trustworthy and likable by a counterpart), honestly answer the question at an economic cost (e.g., obtain a worse offer in a negotiation, failure to get a job offer), or make untruthful or misleading statements, responders can deflect by asking a question that redirects the conversation. Interestingly, deflection both violates and invokes a powerful conversational norm: the Gricean norm of answering a direct question (Grice, 1989). By responding to a direct question with deflection, individuals can shift the focus of the conversation; although a conversational partner may have just asked their own question (and failed to receive a satisfying response), they may feel compelled to answer to the deflection question.

In this article, we explore deflection as a method of responding to sensitive questions. We make an important and novel contribution to the trust, deception, and negotiation literatures by identifying the economic (e.g., financial) and interpersonal benefits (e.g., perceived trust and likability) of deflection. Whereas prior work has explored the costs of benefits of *statements* that are used to respond to direct questions, no prior work has explored the use of *questions* as a tool for responding to direct questions. We demonstrate that by responding to a question with a question, respondents are often able to conceal sensitive information and preserve interpersonal relationships and trust.

Responses to Direct Questions

Many interpersonal interactions are characterized by information asymmetries. This is particularly true of negotiations in which parties have private information (e.g., how badly they want the job or how large their budget is) that, if revealed, could benefit their counterpart and

cause them harm. We term these interactions strategic disclosure interactions. In these settings, the information individuals reveal can fundamentally shape both outcomes and interpersonal perceptions (Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, & Valley, 2000; Gaspar & Schweitzer, 2013; Koning, Van Dijk, Van Beest, & Steinel, 2010; Levine & Schweitzer, 2014; 2015; Lewicki, 1983; Lewicki & Robinson, 1998; O'Connor & Carnevale, 1997; Olekalns & Smith, 2009; Schweitzer & Croson, 1999; Shell, 1991; Tenbrunsel, 1998). Within strategic disclosure interactions, individuals are motivated to conceal sensitive information, but the likelihood of disclosure may be profoundly influenced by contextual factors such as competition, social pressure, financial incentives, and even the medium of communication (Acquisti, John, & Loewenstein, 2012, 2013; John, Acquisti, & Loewenstein, 2011; Hofstetter, Ruppell, & John, 2017; John, 2015; John, Loewenstein, & Prelec, 2012; Schweitzer & Croson, 1999; Steinel & De Dreu, 2004; Steinel, Utz, & Koning, 2010). One tool that is particularly effective in eliciting information from a counterpart is asking a direct question (Schweitzer & Croson, 1999).

Individuals feel compelled to respond honestly and completely to direct questions (Grice, 1989; Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008; Rogers & Norton, 2011; Wiltermuth, Newman, & Raj, 2015). However, answering a question truthfully and completely can come at a personal cost. In a negotiation, for example, someone who fully discloses their private information may be exploited by their counterpart. Similarly, in a job interview, someone who truthfully responds to a sensitive question (e.g., how much they made in their last position or about drug use) may be offered a lower salary or fail to receive an offer. In settings involving sensitive information, people often feel compelled to respond when they are asked a direct question, but may suffer economic costs when they do.

Prior research has described the costs and benefits of honestly answering, declining to answer, and engaging in deception when asked direct questions about sensitive topics (John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016; Rogers & Norton, 2011; Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, & Schweitzer, 2017). Each strategy, however, presents costs and benefits. In contrast to an honest response, individuals can explicitly decline to answer a question to mitigate the costs of revealing sensitive information (e.g., pleading the 5th Amendment during a trial to avoid self-incrimination). However, people who decline to answer direct questions are viewed as less trustworthy and less likable than individuals who disclose sensitive information (John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016). In addition, individuals who decline to answer sensitive questions often reveal information by declining. For example, an individual who responds, “I do not want to answer that question” after having been asked, “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” suggests an answer.

Alternatively, individuals may respond to a question by engaging in deception. Deception is pervasive (Gaspar & Schweitzer, 2013), but individuals who engage in deception risk harm to their long-term relationships if the deception is discovered (Bok, 1978; DePaulo & Kashy, 1998; DePaulo; Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996; John, 2016; Rogers & Norton, 2011; Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, & Schweitzer, 2017; Schweitzer, Hershey & Bradlow, 2006). In practice, deception can take many forms, including lies of commission (explicit false statements), lies of omission (misleading others by omitting relevant information), and paltering (using truthful statements to create a misleading impression). We depict different types of responses in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Prior work on has focused on the use of *statements* to answer direct questions. Surprisingly, no prior work has explored the use of *questions* to answer direct question. This is a significant omission, because responding to a question with a question is not only common, but also a potentially powerful approach to shifting the direction of the conversation. In this article, we explore deflection and make important and novel contributions to the negotiation, deception, and impression management literatures.

Deflection

We consider how deflection influences interpersonal perception and behavior. We focus our investigation on settings in which individuals have conflicting relational and economic motivations, such as a negotiation or an interview. We investigate the effectiveness of deflection for capturing economic surplus while preserving trust and likability.

We develop our first hypotheses with respect to the influence of deflection on interpersonal perception. We postulate that deflection will cause less harm to perceptions of trust and likeability than refusing to answer a direct question. Prior research has found that disclosing information can boost perceptions of trust and likability (John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016). We conjecture that by declining to answer a question, a respondent makes their reluctance to disclose information salient and consequently signals distrust. In contrast, deflection does not make the failure to disclose information salient. Even though respondents fail to reveal information in both cases, respondents who deflect a direct question may successfully shift the topic of the conversation. In addition, recent work reveals that asking questions can signal concern and increase perceptions of likeability (Huang, Yeomans, Brooks, Minson, & Gino, 2017). As a result, deflection questions may boost likeability. Taken together, we expect that responding to a

direct question with a deflection question, compared to responding to a direct question by declining to answer the question, will cause less harm to perceptions of trust and likability.

Hypothesis 1: Perceived trust and likability will be higher after deflecting a question than after declining to answer a question.

We develop our second hypothesis with respect to economic surplus. Compared to responding to a direct question with full disclosure, individuals who deflect questions avoid revealing potentially costly information. Individuals feel obliged to answer a direct question (Grice, 1989; Rogers & Norton, 2011). Though deflection violates this conversational norm, we expect individuals who ask deflecting question to invoke this norm. Rather than insist on a response to their initial question, deflection questions may redirect the focus of the conversation as the initial question asker responds to the deflection question. As a result, deflection may effectively conceal economically costly information, and we expect individuals who deflect question to attain better economic outcomes than those who disclose information.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who deflect sensitive, direct questions will obtain better economic outcomes than those who answer direct questions.

In strategic disclosure interactions such as negotiations, individuals frequently use deception to capture economic gains (De Dreu, Beersma, Steinel, & Van Kleef, 2007; Koning, Van Dijk, Van Beest, & Steinel, 2015; Koning, Steinel, Van Beest, & Van Dijk, 2011; Steinel, Van Kleef, & Van Knippenberg, 2010; Van Beest, Steinel, & Murnighan, 2011; Schweitzer, DeChurch, & Gibson, 2005). Deception, however, is risky (Boles, Croson, & Murnighan, 2000; Schweitzer, Brodt, & Croson, 2002; Schweitzer, DeChurch, & Gibson, 2005; Schweitzer, Hershey, & Bradlow, 2006; Spranca, Minsk, & Baron, 1991). Undetected, deception enables individuals to maintain positive interpersonal perceptions and capture economic surplus.

Detected deception, however, harms both interpersonal perceptions and economic surplus.

Targets who believe deception will accord the deceiver the same interpersonal perception as respondents who provide honest answers. In contrast to deception, deflection redirects the conversation. We expect individuals who deflect questions to fail to reap either the interpersonal and economic benefits of successful deception or incur the interpersonal and economic costs of detected deception.

Hypothesis 3a: Individuals who engage in deception that is undetected will gain greater interpersonal and economic benefits than those who deflect.

Hypothesis 3b: Individuals who engage in deception that is detected will incur greater interpersonal and economic costs than those who deflect.

Overview of Current Work

We explore deflection as a method for contending with direct questions. Specifically, we consider how responding to a question with a question redirects the focus of the conversation, improves economic outcomes, and preserves trust and likability. In a Pilot Study, we describe an interview setting and compare the interpersonal benefits of deflection to declining to respond to a direct question (e.g., “I would prefer not answering.”). In Study 1, we compare the interpersonal and economic consequences of deflection in a negotiation by contrasting deflection to declining to respond and honest disclosure. In Study 2, we extend our investigation to a different negotiation context, and we contrast the effects of deflection to declining to respond, honest disclosure, and an additional control condition—no response to the question. In Study 3, we compare the costs and benefits of deflection to two forms of deception, a lie of commission and paltering. In this study, we explore the relative costs and benefits of deception when it goes undetected or detected.

Pilot Study

In a pilot study, we assess the interpersonal perceptions of an individual who engages in deflection. We contrast the use of deflection with declining to respond to a direct question in an interview scenario.

Method

Participants. We recruited 100 adults from Amazon Mechanical Turk to participate in a study in exchange for \$0.50. A total of 99 people completed the study (70% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 35.29$ years, $SD = 11.99$).

Design and Procedure. We used a mixed between and within-subjects design. We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions: *Declining to Respond* vs. *Deflection*.

We presented participants with a scenario of a job candidate interviewing with a manager. We showed participants a story board with photos of the interview and speech bubbles to depict the conversation. We present a sample of the stimuli we used in Appendix B.

Across conditions, the manager begins the interview by telling the candidate, “I’m still waking up. Do you want to grab a coffee?” The candidate responds, “A coffee would be great.” After this initial dialogue, we collected baseline measures of warmth and competence (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). We used the items “warm,” “good-natured,” “friendly,” and “sincere” to form an index of warmth ($1 = \text{“Not at All”}$, $7 = \text{“Extremely”}$; $\alpha = .91$), we used the items “competent,” “confident,” “capable,” and “intelligent” to form an index of competence ($\alpha = .90$), we used the items “trustworthy” and “honest” to measure perceived trustworthiness ($r = .71$), and we used the item “likable” to measure likability.

After providing initial ratings, participants read the remainder of the interview in which the manager states, “Great. We can take a walk to the café downstairs. On our way you can tell

me how much you were making at your last job?” In the Decline to Respond condition, the candidate responds, “I would prefer not answering.” In the Deflection condition, the candidate responds, “Will the answer impact who pays for the coffee?”

Next, we asked participants to rate the candidate a second time using the same items to assess warmth, competence, trustworthiness, and likability. We also asked participants to rate the extent to which the candidate’s response was “appropriate”, “funny,” “humorous,” and “suitable.” We combined the items “funny” and “humorous” to measure humorousness ($r = .95$), and “appropriate” and “suitable” to measure appropriateness ($r = .80$).

Results and Discussion

We report the means, standard deviations, and test statistics for our measures in Table 2. In this table, we report results both with and without controlling for initial ratings.

We find that interpersonal perceptions were significantly higher following deflection than they were when the candidate explicitly declined to respond. Specifically, the candidate was rated as warmer, more competent, more trustworthy, and more likeable when they deflected the direct question than when they explicitly declined to answer the direct question. Participants also rated the deflection as funnier and more appropriate than the decline to respond.

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

In this pilot study, we find that individuals who deflect are viewed as more likable and more trustworthy than individuals who explicitly declines to respond to a direct question. In addition to boosting perceptions of trust and likability, we find that deflecting leads to higher

perceptions of general warmth and competence. In our remaining studies, we extend our investigation of deflection to a negotiation context and assess the economic and interpersonal consequences of deflection.

Study 1

In Study 1, we examine the effects of deflection in an actual negotiation. We compare deflection with honest disclosure and explicitly declining to respond to the question. We examine the efficacy of deflection for capturing economic surplus while preserving interpersonal perceptions of trust and likability.

Method

Participants. We recruited 328 adults from a city in the northeastern United States to participate in a behavioral lab study in exchange for \$10. A total of 232 people passed the comprehension check, completed the negotiation, and finished the study (25% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 22.23$ years, $SD = 6.19$).

Design and Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to one of three between-subjects conditions within a negotiation: *Declining to Respond* vs. *Honest Disclosure* vs. *Deflection*.

We introduced the negotiation, an adapted version of the Hearts case (Schweitzer, 2015). We then informed participants that they would be randomly assigned to the role of buyer or seller and paired with another participant for the negotiation. In reality, we assigned all participants to the role of seller and paired them with a confederate buyer. We present the seller instructions we gave to participants in Appendix C.

We asked participants to imagine that they were the owner of an art gallery and were trying to sell a piece of art, “Hearts in the Spring,” 1969. We informed participants that they had

purchased the piece of art for \$7,000, and that this painting was one part of the artist Jim Brine's four piece Hearts series. We told participants that a buyer who did not have other pieces in the series would be willing to pay closer to \$7,000 for the "Hearts in the Spring" piece, but that a buyer who had collected other pieces and wanted to complete their set would be willing to pay closer to \$14,000.

We informed participants that there were two key pieces of information they needed from the buyer before they made an offer. The first key piece of information was whether or not the buyer was an art dealer or a personal collector. We included this issue in the negotiation to mask the purpose of the study. The second key piece of information we told sellers to obtain was whether or not the buyer had other pieces in the Hearts collection. This instruction guided participants to ask the buyer a direct question about their collection.

In this study, we manipulated how the confederate buyer responded to the participant seller across our three conditions: *Declining to Respond*, *Honest Disclosure*, and *Deflection*.

After participants read the instructions, we administered a comprehension check. We allowed participants three attempts to pass the comprehension check. Fourteen participants did not pass the attention check after three attempts and we dismissed them from the study.

Next, we had participants negotiate with the confederate buyer. If the participant asked the buyer if they had other pieces in the Hearts series, we manipulated the buyer's response. In the *Decline to Respond* condition, the confederate explicitly declined to answer the question (e.g., "I'm not prepared to discuss my collection right now."). In the *Honest Disclosure* condition, the confederate reported that they did have the other pieces in the Hearts collection (e.g., "I did purchase the other Hearts pieces in the collection."). In the *Deflection* condition, the confederate responded to the question with a question that would redirect the conversation (e.g.,

“How much do you want for this piece?”). To increase credibility in the script that the confederates used, we used an adapted version of a negotiation completed between a student buyer and a student seller. We present the script that we had our confederates follow in Appendix D.

According to the negotiation instructions, the most the buyer could pay (the top of the zone of possible agreement) was \$14,000. Agreements below \$14,000 gave the buyer economic surplus, and we calculated the economic surplus of each buyer by subtracting final offers in the negotiation from \$14,000. This allowed us to compare the buyer’s financial outcomes across conditions.

After the negotiation, we had participants rate the buyer on the following qualities: “Forthcoming”, “Trustworthy”, “Honest”, “Likable”, “Good-Natured”, and “Pleasant” (7-point Likert, 1 = “Not at all”, 7 = “Extremely”). We combined the first three items to create a measure of perceived trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.90$), and the remaining items to create a measure of likability ($\alpha = 0.95$).

We also measured how well the buyer concealed information about their collection. Specifically, we asked buyers, “How likely is it that the buyer owns other pieces in the “Hearts” collection?” (reverse scored). After participants completed an attention check, we asked them to provide demographic information (age and gender of participants).

Results and Discussion

We find that deflection is highly effective. When buyers deflected the sellers’ questions, they captured greater economic surplus and preserved perceptions of trust and likability. We summarize the results of Study 1 in Table 3, and depict the main results in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

Surplus. Economic surplus was significantly higher in the *Deflection* and the *Decline to Respond* conditions than in the *Honest Disclosure* condition. Participants made significantly lower offers in the *Deflection* and *Decline to Respond* conditions than in the *Honest Disclosure* condition¹. Offers were not significantly different between the *Deflection* and the *Decline to Respond* conditions².

Trust. Perceived trustworthiness was significantly different across all conditions. Perceived trustworthiness was lowest in the *Decline to Respond* condition, higher in the *Deflection* condition, and highest in the *Honest Disclosure* condition.

Likability. Likability was significantly different across all conditions. Likability was lowest in the *Decline to Respond* condition, higher in the *Deflection* condition, and highest in the *Honest Disclosure* condition.

Concealment. Differences in perceived likelihood that the buyer has other pieces were significantly different across all conditions. Participants believed that the buyer was significantly less likely to own other pieces in the collection in the *Deflection* condition than in the *Decline to Respond* and *Honest Disclosure* conditions.

Insert Table 3 about here

¹ We analyze initial offers to calculate economic surplus because those offers are most proximate to our manipulation.

² Our results are not significantly different if we look at intention to treat and include participants who were assigned to a condition, but did not engage in or complete the negotiation.

Mediation. We conducted both Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). We tested perceived trustworthiness, perceived likability, and concealment as simultaneous mediators. The relationship between deflection and surplus was mediated by concealment; that is, deflection lowered participants' perceptions of the likelihood that the buyer had other pieces in the collection, which enabled the buyer to capture greater surplus. We provide additional details of our mediation analysis in Appendix G, and summarize the mediation results across all of our studies in Table 6.

Discussion

In Study 1, we find that deflection helps individuals capture economic surplus and preserve perceptions of likability and trustworthiness. Specifically, negotiation counterparts perceived individuals who deflected to be more trustworthy and more likable than individuals who explicitly declined to answer a direct question. These negotiators also gave individuals who deflected better offers than they did to individuals who disclosed information about their collection.

Deflection was effective at redirecting the conversation. In the deflection condition, only 12% of the participants asked the buyer more than once if they had the other pieces in the Hearts collection. Deflection was also very effective at concealing information. Individuals thought that individuals who deflected questions were less likely to have the other pieces in the collection than individuals who explicitly declined to answer the question and individuals who disclosed information about their collection. The disclosure of this sensitive information directly increased economic surplus for individuals who deflected.

Study 2

In Study 2, we extend our investigation in several ways. As in Study 1, we investigate deflection within a negotiation context, but used a different deflection, we used additional conditions to include a broader set of control conditions, and we increased the sample size.

Method

Participants. We recruited 900 adults from Amazon Mechanical Turk to participate in a study in exchange for \$0.50. A total of 940 individuals started the study. A total of 904 people passed a comprehension check, an attention check, and completed the study (52% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 36.41$ years, $SD = 12.11$).

Design and Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to one of four between-subjects conditions: *Control vs. Decline to Respond vs. Honest Disclosure vs. Deflection*.

Across conditions, we had participants review a negotiation scenario, and we assigned all participants to the role of seller. As in Study 1, we adapted the negotiation from the Hearts case (Schweitzer, 2015). We told participants that they were the owner of an art gallery and were trying to sell a piece of art, “Panda Bears,” 1969. We then informed participants that they had purchased the piece of art for \$7,000, and that the piece of art was part of the artist Jim Brine’s four piece series on Bears. We instructed participants that a buyer who did not have other pieces in the series would be willing to pay closer to \$7,000 for the Panda piece, but that a buyer who had other pieces and wanted to complete the series would be willing to pay closer to \$14,000. See Appendix E for the full instructions we presented to participants.

We then gave participants a comprehension check. We allowed participants three attempts to pass the comprehension check. Twenty-eight participants (3.0%) did not pass the attention check after three attempts and were dismissed them from the study. Next, we presented participants who passed the comprehension check with a transcript of a negotiation between the

art dealer and a potential buyer. The transcript was an adapted version of a real negotiation that occurred in a class setting that involved a very similar version of this scenario.

Across conditions, every seller in this negotiation asked the buyer, “Do you own other pieces in the bears series?” In the *Control* condition, we ended the transcript after the buyer asked the question. In the *Decline to Respond* condition, we had the buyer explain that, “I’m not prepared to discuss my collection right now.” In the *Honest Disclosure* condition, we had the buyer explain that, “I did purchase a different Bears piece recently.” In the *Deflection* condition, we had the buyer respond, “How long have you had the painting?” We present an example of the transcript we showed to participants in Appendix F.

Economic surplus was one of our primary dependent variables. After the transcript, we asked participants, “What offer would you make the buyer?” We calculated economic surplus by subtracting offers from the top end of the zone of possible agreement (\$14,000).

Next, we had participants rate the buyer on the following qualities: “Forthcoming”, “Trustworthy”, “Honest”, “Likable”, “Good-Natured”, and “Pleasant” (7-point Liker, 1 = “Not at all”, 7 = “Extremely”). We combined the first three items to create a measure of perceived trustworthiness ($\alpha = 0.89$), and the remaining items to create a measure of likability ($\alpha = 0.95$). Using the same response scale, we measure how well the buyer concealed information about their collection by having participants rate, “How likely is it that the buyer owns other pieces in the “Bears” collection?” (reverse scored). After participants completed an attention check, we asked them to provide demographic information (age and gender of participants). Eight individuals failed the attention check (0.9%) and were excluded from our analysis. Finally, we gave participants a completion code so that they could receive payment for the study.

Results and Discussion

Insert Figure 2 about here

Surplus. Economic surplus was significantly higher in the *Deflection*, *Decline to Respond*, and *Control* conditions than it was in the *Honest Disclosure* condition. Participants made significantly lower offers in the *Deflection*, *Decline to Respond*, and *Control* conditions than in the *Honest Disclosure* condition. Offers were not significantly different between the *Deflection*, *Decline to Respond*, and *Control* conditions.

Trust. Perceived trustworthiness was significantly different across all conditions. Perceived trustworthiness was lowest in the *Decline to Respond* condition, higher in the *Deflection* condition, higher in the *Control* condition, and highest in the *Honest Disclosure* condition.

Likability. Likability was significantly different across all conditions. Likability was lowest in the *Decline to Respond* condition, higher in the *Deflection* condition, higher in the *Control* condition, and highest in the *Honest Disclosure* condition.

Concealment. Differences in perceived likelihood that the buyer has other pieces were significant across all conditions. Participants believed that the buyer was significantly less likely to own other pieces in the collection in the *Deflection* condition than in the *Decline to Respond* and *Honest Disclosure* conditions. Compared to the *Control* condition, participants thought the buyer was more likely to own other pieces in the other three conditions. We summarize the results of Study 2 in Table 4.

Insert Table 4 about here

Mediation. We conducted both Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). We tested perceived trustworthiness, perceived likability, and concealment as simultaneous mediators. The relationship between deflection and offers was mediated by perceived likelihood that the buyer had other pieces; that is, deflection shifted perceptions that the buyer had other pieces in the collection, which changed offers made to the buyer. We provide additional details of our mediation analysis in Appendix G, and summarize the mediation results across all of our studies in Table 6.

Discussion

In Study 2, we find that individuals who deflect conceal information about their collection, and as a result receive better offers than individuals who disclose information about their collection. Individuals who fully disclose information about their collection are viewed as trustworthy and likable. However, this disclosure comes at a cost. Individuals who disclose information receive worse offers in the negotiation.

We find that deflection enables individuals to conceal information about their collection and obtain better outcomes than revealing information. We also find that deflection, compared to declining to answer the question, improved perceptions of trust and likability compared to individuals who declined to answer the question about their collection.

Study 3

In Study 3, we extend our investigation in several ways. First, we use a different type of deflection. Second, we contrast deflection with two forms of deception: Lies of commission and paltering. When asked a sensitive question (e.g., “Do you plan on having children soon?”), a deceptive respondent would lie by commission (e.g., “I do not plan to have children.”) or palter,

use truthful statements to create a misleading impression (e.g., “Having kids would be a huge time commitment.”; Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, & Schweitzer, 2016). In order to compare the long-term interpersonal risks of deflection, lies of commission, and paltering, we measure interpersonal perceptions both before and after we inform participants that the buyer had other pieces in the series. Finally, we measure the extent participants would be willing to negotiate with the buyer again.

Method

Participants. We recruited 300 adults from Amazon Mechanical Turk to participate in a study in exchange for \$0.50. A total of 304 people completed the study (56% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 36.07$ years, $SD = 11.69$).

Design and Procedure. We randomly assigned participants to one of three between-subjects conditions: *Lie of Commission* vs. *Paltering* vs. *Full Disclosure* vs. *Deflection*.

We used the very similar materials as those we used in Study 2. Across all conditions, the seller in the negotiation asks the buyer, “Do you own any Bear pieces?” In the *Lie of Commission* condition, the buyer responds, “No. I do not have any other Bear pieces.” In the *Palter* condition, the buyer responds, “I’ve been looking to buy one.” Note that in this case, the buyer has the other three pieces in the Bears series, but the palter includes truthful—but misleading—statement. In the *Deflection* condition, the buyer responds by asking a question, “Can you tell me more about this piece? What price are you asking for it?”

We had participants complete the same dependent measures as in Study 2: surplus, trust, likability, and concealment. Next, we informed participants that the buyer had the other 3 pieces in the Bears series, and we again had participants rate the buyer in terms of trust and likability.

Finally, we asked participants, “How willing would you be to sell to the buyer again?” (7-point Likert, 1 = “Not at all”, 7 = “Extremely”).

Results and Discussion

Before deception is detected, deception effectively captures value in negotiations and maintains favorable impressions of trust and likability. However, deception has significant interpersonal costs if discovered. That is, after revealing the truth about the buyer’s history and interests, the sellers’ ratings of the buyers’ trust and likeability were significantly lower. In contrast to engaging in deception, deflection had lower interpersonal costs after participants discovered that the buyer had other pieces in the collection. We summarize the results of Study 3 in Table 5, and depict the main results in Figure 3.

Insert Figure 3 about here

Surplus. Economic surplus was lowest in the *Deflection* condition. Surplus was not significantly different in the *Lie of Commission* and *Palter* conditions.

Trust. Initial ratings of trust were significantly lower in the *Deflection* condition than in the other conditions. Ratings of trust were significantly higher in the Deflection condition than the other conditions after participants learned that the buyer had the other pieces in the Bears series.

Likability. The results for likability are similar to the results for trust. Initial ratings of likability were significantly lower in the *Deflection* condition than in the other conditions. Ratings of likability were significantly higher in the Deflection condition than the other conditions after participants learned that the buyer had the other pieces in the Bears series.

Concealment. Participants believed that the buyer was significantly more likely to own other pieces in the collection in the *Deflection* condition than in the other conditions. Perceptions of the likelihood of owning other pieces were not significantly different in the *Lie of Commission* and *Palter* conditions.

Willingness to negotiate again. Ratings of willingness to negotiate with the buyer again were significantly different across all conditions. Willingness to negotiate with the buyer again was highest in the *Deflection* condition and lowest in the *Lie of Commission* condition.

Insert Table 5 about here

Mediation. We conducted both Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrap analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). We first analyzed initial ratings, and we tested perceived trustworthiness, perceived likability, and concealment as simultaneous mediators. The relationship between deflection and higher offers was mediated by concealment; that is, participants believed that the buyer was more likely to have other pieces in the collection in the deflection condition than the deception conditions, which lead to higher offers and lower surplus.

We also conducted mediation analysis for willingness to negotiate with the buyer again. We analyzed final ratings, we analyzed perceived trustworthiness, perceived likability, and concealment as simultaneous mediators. The relationship between deflection and greater willingness to negotiate with the buyer again was mediated by perceptions of likability, trustworthiness, and concealment. In other words, participants were more willing to negotiate with the individual who deflected in a follow-on negotiation, because they viewed that negotiator as more likable and more trustworthy. That is, they viewed the buyer who deflected as having

concealed less information about their collection than the buyers who engaged in deception. We provide additional details of our mediation analyses in Appendix G, and summarize the mediation results across all of our studies in Table 6.

Insert Table 6 about here

Discussion

In Study 3, we compare the effects of deflection to two forms of deception – paltering and a lie of commission. We find that deception has substantial economic and interpersonal benefits, as long as the deception is not discovered. Prior to learning that the buyer had other pieces in the collection, participants rated the buyer who paltered or lied by commission as more likable and trustworthy than an individual who deflected. In addition, buyers who paltered or lied by commission were also more effective at capturing economic surplus.

However, deception is far riskier than deflection. After we revealed that the buyer had other pieces in the collection, participants were more willing to negotiate again with the buyer who deflected than the buyers who paltered or a lied by commission. After revealing the truth, participants judged the buyer who deflected as more trustworthy, more likable, and as having concealed less information than the buyers who engaged in deception.

General Discussion

In this work, we explore deflection as a method of responding to direct questions. We find that by responding to a question with a question, individuals can maintain favorable interpersonal impressions, capture economic surplus by avoiding revealing potentially costly economic information, and avoid the risks inherent in using deception. In a Pilot Study, we

motivate our investigation by demonstrating the interpersonal benefits of deflection. In an interview scenario, we find that an individual who responded to a direct question from a manager with a question was viewed as more trustworthy, likable, warm, and competent than an individual who declined to respond and explicitly refused to answer the question.

In Study 1, we examine the effects of deflection in a negotiation simulation. We find that individuals who deflected captured more economic surplus than individuals who honestly disclosed information. Consistent with our Pilot Study, defectors were viewed as more likable and trustworthy than individuals who explicitly declined to respond. In Study 2, we compare the effects of deflection with declining to respond and honest disclosure in a negotiation setting. We find that deflection imposes less interpersonal costs than declining to respond, and less economic costs than honest disclosure. We also contrasted the response conditions with a control condition in which we ended the scenario after the direct question was asked. Although this control condition is not a viable option in most actual interactions (we rarely end an interaction immediately after someone asks a direct question), it confirms that deflection enables individuals to preserve economic surplus while mitigating the interpersonal harm caused by explicitly declining to respond.

In Study 3, we contrast the interpersonal and economic outcomes of deflection to two forms of deception, a lie of commission and paltering. We find that deflection carries greater interpersonal and economic costs than deception initially, but that once deception is discovered, individuals view the person who deflects as more trustworthy and more likable, and are more willing to negotiate with the deflector again than the counterpart who engaged in deception.

Theoretical Implications

Our investigation makes several important theoretical contributions to the trust, deception, and negotiations literatures. First, we are the first to document the use of questions as a method of responding to direct questions. We establish deflection as an effective strategy for redirecting a conversation. Prior work identifies *statements* that individuals use to respond to direct questions (e.g., John, Barasz, & Norton, 2016; Rogers & Norton, 2011; Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, & Schweitzer; 2017). We describe the relative costs and benefits of each type of statement: declining to respond harms relational outcomes but can help economic ones, honest disclosure helps relational outcomes but harms economic ones, and deception can harm long-term relational outcomes if it is discovered. We demonstrate that deflection offers relational and economic benefits and carries less risk than deception.

Second, we contribute to the negotiation, deception, and trust literatures by identifying and contrasting alternative approaches for responding to direct, difficult questions. We develop a framework and assess the costs and benefits of alternative approaches for answering these questions. This work has both theoretical and practical implications for across domains, ranging from negotiations to interviews. We depict the alternative strategies and the tradeoffs of these strategies in Table 7.

Insert Table 7 about here

Third, we identify a Gricean norm paradox. Deflection redirects a conversation by invoking the Gricean norm that compels respondents to answer questions (Grice, 1989). Ironically, deflection violates this same norm. By redirecting the conversation, deflection enables individuals to conceal sensitive information.

Fourth, our work advances our understanding of the economic and interpersonal consequences of explicitly declining to respond to a direct question. Interestingly, individuals who explicitly decline to respond to a direct question signal information. That is, by declining to answer a direct question, individuals suggest a response. For example, when an employer asks a prospective employee if they have ever been convicted of a felony or a negotiator asks the other party if they have other offers, explicitly declining to answer reveals information.

Prescriptive Advice

Our findings identify deflection as an effective strategy for responding to direct, difficult questions. Across Studies 1, 2, and 3, we find that deflection effectively concealed costly information and preserved interpersonal perceptions of trust and liking. In these studies, participants consistently perceived the negotiator who deflected to be less likely to have the other paintings in the collection than those who declined to answer the question. In both an interview and a negotiation setting, we find that individuals who deflect are viewed as more likable and trustworthy than individuals who explicitly decline to answer a question.

Although deflection may be effective in contending with direct questions, negotiators and prospective interviewees may need to practice their use of deflection. Conversation norms guide individuals to answer direct questions. It may require effort and practice to both violate and invoke this conversational norm by deflecting a difficult question.

Our findings also inform a number of prescriptions for those seeking information. Interviewers, negotiators, and debate moderators should anticipate and guard against deflection. If individuals need answers to critical questions, they should anticipate the tug of Gricean norms, recognize when a question response fails to answer a direct question, and persist in their pursuit of information. In addition, question askers should recognize that deflection conveys

information; specifically, someone who deflects reveals that they would prefer to avoid discussing the topic.

Future Directions

Integrating our main studies, we call for future work to investigate the moderating effects of question type and context on the efficacy of deflection. It is likely that the type of deflecting question will influence its success. For example, prior work has found that questions that build on a conversational partner's prior comments are more effective at boosting likability than are questions that are less relevant to the conversation (Huang et al., 2017). Similarly, we expect deflection to be more effective if the deflector responds with a question that is more similar to the current conversational topic than a question that is less related or random. Deflection may also be more successful at redirecting the conversation if the deflection question triggers a counterpart's egocentrism by asking the counterpart to discuss something high in self-relevance (e.g., deflecting the question, "When do you plan on having kids?" with "How many kids do you have?"; Lelieveld, Van Dijk, Van Beest, Steinel, & Van Kleef, 2011; Steinel, Van Kleef, & Harinck, 2008; Van Dijk, Van Kleef, Steinel, & Van Beest, 2008; Van Kleef, Van Dijk, Steinel, Harinck, & Van Beest, 2008).

Future work should also explore the moderating role of context, expertise, and suspicion. In our settings, we considered the role of deflection in an interview and in negotiation settings. Deflection is likely to be effective across many settings, such as debates and dates, but in other settings, such as interrogations or a trial deflection may be far less effective. We also call for future work to explore how to glean information from deflection. For example, if deflection questions are delivered defensively or with an angry tone they may convey a particular aversion to discussing the topic.

Another avenue for future work is to examine how individuals might avoid being misdirected by another person's deflection. An individual may be less susceptible to deflection with experience and if they are alerted to it (Steinel, Abele, De Dreu, 2007). Prior research has shown that concrete plans and reminders are effective for helping people follow through with a desired behavior (Rogers, Milkman, John, & Norton, 2015; Rogers & Milkman, 2016). We conjecture that the efficacy of deflection may be reduced if question askers, such as negotiators, create a specific list of questions they need to have answered.

Future work should also explore trust recovery and forgiveness following deflection. Although we find that deflection harms trust far less than a lie of commission or paltering, we found that trust was still harmed when participants discovered that the individual who deflected had concealed information. Prior research has identified factors such as self-control, narcissism, destiny beliefs (beliefs that a relationship is "meant to be"), attachment style, depletion, and commitment to the relationship influence forgiveness and trust recovery (Burnette, Davisson, Finkel, Van Tongeren, Hui, & Hoyle, 2014; Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro, & Hannon, 2002; Finkel, Burnette, & Scissors, 2007; Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2002; Hannon, Rusbult, Finkel, & Kumashiro, 2010; Haselhuhn, Schweitzer, Wood, 2010; Molden & Finkel, 2010; Righetti, Finkenauer, & Finkel, 2013; Rusbult, Hannon, Stocker, & Finkel, 2005; Rusbult, Kumashiro, Finkel, & Wildschut, 2002; Stanton & Finkel, 2012). Related research could also explore how relationship characteristics moderate the efficacy and relational consequences of deflection. For example, deflection might be more or less harmful to trust when used in a close relationship than with an unfamiliar counterpart.

Conclusion

In our social and professional lives, information exchange is crucial and direct questions represent one of the best avenues for gathering information. In many settings, however, we are loath to reveal private information. When we are asked direct questions about a sensitive issue, we face several alternatives. The most obvious alternatives involve revealing information, explicitly declining to answer the question, and engaging in deception. One particularly effective approach to answering a direct question, however, is easy to overlook because it both violates and invokes conversational norms: deflection. Sometimes, the best way to answer a question may be to pose a new one.

References

- Acquisti, A., John, L. K., & Loewenstein, G. (2012). The impact of relative standards on the propensity to disclose. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), 160-174.
- Acquisti, A., John, L. K., & Loewenstein, G. (2013). What is privacy worth?. *The Journal of Legal Studies*, 42(2), 249-274.
- Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(6), 1173–1182.
- Bazerman, M. H., Curhan, J. R., Moore, D. A., & Valley, K. L. (2000). Negotiation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 51(1), 279-314.
- Bok, S. (1978). *Lying: Moral choices in public and private life*. New York, NY: Pantheon.
- Boles, T. L., Croson, R. T., & Murnighan, J. K. (2000). Deception and retribution in repeated ultimatum bargaining. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 83(2), 235-259.
- Burnette, J. L., Davisson, E. K., Finkel, E. J., Van Tongeren, D. R., Hui, C. M., & Hoyle, R. H. (2014). Self-control and forgiveness: A meta-analytic review. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 5(4), 443-450.
- De Dreu, C. K., Beersma, B., Steinel, W., & Van Kleef, G. A. (2007). The psychology of negotiation. *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles*, 608-629.
- DePaulo, B. M., & Kashy, D. A. (1998). Everyday lies in close and casual relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 63–79.<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.1.63>

- DePaulo, B. M., Kashy, D. A., Kirkendol, S. E., Wyer, M. M., & Epstein, J. A. (1996). Lying in everyday life. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 979–995.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.5.979>
- Exline, J. J., Baumeister, R. F., Bushman, B. J., Campbell, W. K., & Finkel, E. J. (2004). Too proud to let go: narcissistic entitlement as a barrier to forgiveness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 87(6), 894.
- Finkel, E. J., Burnette, J. L., & Scissors, L. E. (2007). Vengefully ever after: destiny beliefs, state attachment anxiety, and forgiveness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 92(5), 871.
- Finkel, E. J., Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., & Hannon, P. A. (2002). Dealing with betrayal in close relationships: Does commitment promote forgiveness?. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 82(6), 956.
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878-902.
- Gaspar, J. P., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2013). The emotion deception model: a review of deception in negotiation and the role of emotion in deception. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, 6(3), 160-179.
- Grice, H. P. (1989). *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hannon, P. A., Rusbult, C. E., Finkel, E. J., & Kumashiro, M. (2010). In the wake of betrayal: Amends, forgiveness, and the resolution of betrayal. *Personal Relationships*, 17(2), 253-278.

- Haselhuhn, M. P., Schweitzer, M. E., & Wood, A. M. (2010). How implicit beliefs influence trust recovery. *Psychological Science*, 21(5), 645-648.
- Hayes, A. F., & Preacher, K. J. (2014). Statistical mediation analysis with a multicategorical independent variable. *British Journal of Mathematical and Statistical Psychology*, 67, 451-470.
- Hofstetter, R., Ruppell, R.; & John, L. K. (2017). Temporary sharing prompts unrestrained disclosures that leave lasting negative impressions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, forthcoming.
- Huang, K., Yeomans, M., Brooks, A.W., Minson, J. & Gino, F. (2017). It doesn't hurt to ask: Question-Asking increases liking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, in press.
- John, L. K. (2015). The consumer psychology of online privacy: Insights and opportunities from behavioral decision theory. *The Cambridge handbook of consumer psychology*, 619-646.
- John, L. K. (2016). How to Negotiate with a Liar. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(7-8), 114-117.
- John, L. K., Acquisti, A., & Loewenstein, G. (2011). Strangers on a plane: Context-dependent willingness to divulge sensitive information. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(5), 858-873.
- John, L. K., Barasz, K., & Norton, M. I. (2016). Hiding personal information reveals the worst. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(4), 954-959.
- John, L. K., Loewenstein, G., & Prelec, D. (2012). Measuring the prevalence of questionable research practices with incentives for truth telling. *Psychological science*, 23(5), 524-532.
- Koning, L., Steinel, W., Van Beest, I., & Van Dijk, E. (2011). Power and deception in ultimatum bargaining. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 115(1), 35-42.

- Koning, L., Van Dijk, E., Van Beest, I., & Steinel, W. (2010). An instrumental account of deception and reactions to deceit in bargaining. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 20(1), 57-73.
- Lelieveld, G. J., Van Dijk, E., Van Beest, I., Steinel, W., & Van Kleef, G. A. (2011). Disappointed in you, angry about your offer: Distinct negative emotions induce concessions via different mechanisms. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47(3), 635-641.
- Levine, E. E., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2014). Are liars ethical? On the tension between benevolence and honesty. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 53, 107-117.
- Levine, E. E., & Schweitzer, M. E. (2015). Prosocial lies: When deception breeds trust. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 126, 88-106.
- Lewicki, R. J. (1983). Lying and deception: A behavioral model. *Negotiating in Organizations*, 68, 90.
- Lewicki, R. J., & Robinson, R. J. (1998). Ethical and unethical bargaining tactics: An empirical study. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 17(6), 665-682.
- Mazar, N., Amir, O., & Ariely, D. (2008). The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance. *Journal of marketing research*, 45(6), 633-644.
- Molden, D. C., & Finkel, E. J. (2010). Motivations for promotion and prevention and the role of trust and commitment in interpersonal forgiveness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 46(2), 255-268.
- O'Connor, K. M., & Carnevale, P. J. (1997). A nasty but effective negotiation strategy: Misrepresentation of a common-value issue. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23(5), 504-515.

- Olekalns, M., & Smith, P. L. (2009). Mutually dependent: Power, trust, affect and the use of deception in negotiation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 85(3), 347-365.
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments, & Computers*, 36, 717–731. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3758/BF03206553>
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods*, 40, 879–891. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3758/BRM.40.3.879>
- Righetti, F., Finkenauer, C., & Finkel, E. J. (2013). Low self-control promotes the willingness to sacrifice in close relationships. *Psychological Science*, 24(8), 1533-1540.
- Rogers, T., & Milkman, K. L. (2016). Reminders Through Association. *Psychological Science*, 27(7), 973-986.
- Rogers, T., Milkman, K. L., John, L. K., & Norton, M. I. (2015). Beyond good intentions: Prompting people to make plans improves follow-through on important tasks. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, 1(2), 33-41.
- Rogers, T., & Norton, M. I. (2011). The artful dodger: Answering the wrong question the right way. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 17, 139–147.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0023439>
- Rogers, T., Zeckhauser, R., Gino, F., Norton, M.I., & Schweitzer, M.E. (2016). Artful paltering: The risks and rewards of using truthful statements to mislead others. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 112(3), 456-473.
- Rusbult, C. E., Hannon, P. A., Stocker, S. L., & Finkel, E. J. (2005). Forgiveness and relational repair. *Handbook of forgiveness*, 185-205.

- Rusbult, C. E., Kumashiro, M., Finkel, E. J., & Wildschut, T. (2002). The war of the roses: An interdependence analysis of betrayal and forgiveness. *Understanding marriage: Developments in the study of couple interaction*, 251-281.
- Schweitzer, M.E. (2015). Hearts case. Wharton School.
- Schweitzer, M. E., Brodt, S. E., & Croson, R. T. (2002). Seeing and believing: Visual access and the strategic use of deception. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 13(3), 258-375.
- Schweitzer, M. E., & Croson, R. (1999). Curtailing deception: The impact of direct questions on lies and omissions. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 10(3), 225-248.
- Schweitzer, M. E., DeChurch, L. A., & Gibson, D. E. (2005). Conflict frames and the use of deception: Are competitive negotiators less ethical?. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 35(10), 2123-2149.
- Schweitzer, M. E., Hershey, J. C., & Bradlow, E. T. (2006). Promises and lies: Restoring violated trust. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 101(1), 1-19.
- Shell, G. R. (1991). When is it Legal to Lie in Negotiations?. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 32(3), 93.
- Spranca, M., Minsk, E., & Baron, J. (1991). Omission and commission in judgment and choice. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 27(1), 76-105.
- Stanton, S. C., & Finkel, E. J. (2012). Too tired to take offense: When depletion promotes forgiveness. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48(2), 587-590.
- Steinel, W., Abele, A. E., & De Dreu, C. K. (2007). Effects of experience and advice on process and performance in negotiations. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 10(4), 533-550.

- Steinel, W., & De Dreu, C. K. (2004). Social motives and strategic misrepresentation in social decision making. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 86(3), 419.
- Steinel, W., De Dreu, C. K., Ouwehand, E., & Ramírez-Marín, J. Y. (2009). When constituencies speak in multiple tongues: The relative persuasiveness of hawkish minorities in representative negotiation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 109(1), 67-78.
- Steinel, W., Van Kleef, G. A., & Harinck, F. (2008). Are you talking to me?! Separating the people from the problem when expressing emotions in negotiation. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44(2), 362-369.
- Steinel, W., Van Kleef, G. A., Van Knippenberg, D., Hogg, M. A., Homan, A. C., & Moffitt, G. (2010). How intragroup dynamics affect behavior in intergroup conflict: The role of group norms, prototypicality, and need to belong. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 13(6), 779-794.
- Steinel, W., Utz, S., & Koning, L. (2010). The good, the bad and the ugly thing to do when sharing information: Revealing, concealing and lying depend on social motivation, distribution and importance of information. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 113(2), 85-96.
- Tenbrunsel, A. E. (1998). Misrepresentation and expectations of misrepresentation in an ethical dilemma: The role of incentives and temptation. *Academy of Management Journal*, 41(3), 330-339.
- Van Beest, I., Steinel, W., & Murnighan, J. K. (2011). Honesty pays: On the benefits of having and disclosing information in coalition bargaining. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 47(4), 738-747.

- Van Dijk, E., Van Kleef, G. A., Steinel, W., & Van Beest, I. (2008). A social functional approach to emotions in bargaining: when communicating anger pays and when it backfires. *Journal of Personality and social Psychology*, 94(4), 600.
- Van Kleef, G. A., Van Dijk, E., Steinel, W., Harinck, F., & Van Beest, I. (2008). Anger in social conflict: Cross-situational comparisons and suggestions for the future. *Group Decision and Negotiation*, 17(1), 13-30.
- Wiltermuth, S. S., Newman, D. T., & Raj, M. (2015). The consequences of dishonesty. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 6, 20-24.

Tables and Figures

Table 1. Types of Responses to Questions

<u>Method</u>	<u>Definition</u>	<u>Response Type</u>	<u>Examples</u>	
			<u>Do you plan to have children soon?</u>	<u>What was your salary in your last position?</u>
Honest Disclosure	Fully and honestly respond to the question with no intention of deceiving the counterpart.	Statement	My husband and I are currently trying to have kids.	I made \$60,000 in my last position.
Declining to Respond	Refuse to answer the question.	Statement	I would rather not answer that question.	I don't feel comfortable discussing my prior salary.
Lie by Commission	Make untruthful statements with the intention of deceiving a counterpart.	Statement	I do not plan on having children soon.	I made \$80,000 in my last position.
Paltering	Provide truthful statements with the intention of deceiving a counterpart.	Statement	I think having kids is a huge responsibility and really is not for everyone.	My last company paid very well and had excellent benefits.
Deflection	Responding with a question that shifts the focus of the conversation to a different topic or person.	Question	Do you have kids?	Is that going to impact who pays for lunch?

Table 1. Summary of the methods of responding to direct questions during strategic disclosure interactions.

Table 2. Summary of Results for Pilot Study.

Variable	<i>F</i>	η^2	Decline to Respond		Deflection	
			<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)
Warmth	$F(2, 96) = 28.55^{***}$	0.37	4.28 _a	(1.16)	5.53 _b	(1.08)
Competence	$F(2, 96) = 21.81^{***}$	0.31	4.80 _a	(1.23)	5.44 _b	(1.03)
Trustworthiness	$F(2, 96) = 19.97^{***}$	0.29	4.51 _a	(1.27)	5.32 _b	(1.04)
Likability	$F(2, 96) = 30.91^{***}$	0.39	4.18 _a	(1.30)	5.63 _b	(1.20)
<u>Without Controls</u>						
Warmth	$F(1, 97) = 40.21^{***}$	0.29	4.28 _a	(1.16)	5.53 _b	(1.08)
Competence	$F(1, 97) = 7.93^{**}$	0.08	4.80 _a	(1.23)	5.44 _b	(1.03)
Trustworthiness	$F(1, 97) = 11.91^{***}$	0.11	4.51 _a	(1.27)	5.32 _b	(1.04)
Likability	$F(1, 97) = 33.16^{***}$	0.25	4.18 _a	(1.30)	5.63 _b	(1.20)
Funniness	$F(1, 97) = 257.92^{***}$	0.73	1.70 _a	(1.18)	5.66 _b	(1.27)
Appropriateness	$F(1, 97) = 18.39^{***}$	0.16	3.85 _a	(1.63)	5.22 _b	(1.56)

Table 2. Means in each row with different subscripts were significantly different at the $p < .05$

level. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. We report all results with and without controlling for initial ratings of the candidate.

Table 3. Summary of Results for Study 1.

Variable	<i>F</i>	η^2	Decline to Respond		Honest Disclosure		Deflection	
			<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)
Surplus (in \$1,000s)	$F(2, 229) = 4.65^*$	0.04	2.27 _a	(2.24)	0.94 _b	(1.91)	1.85 _a	(3.68)
Concealment	$F(2, 229) = 25.67^{***}$	0.18	1.49 _a	(1.23)	0.65 _b	(0.97)	2.11 _c	(1.57)
Trustworthiness	$F(2, 229) = 33.66^{***}$	0.23	4.02 _a	(1.58)	5.75 _b	(1.03)	5.07 _c	(1.24)
Likability	$F(2, 229) = 23.96^{***}$	0.17	4.47 _a	(1.57)	5.85 _b	(0.90)	5.17 _c	(1.12)

Table 3. Means in each row with different subscripts were significantly different at the $p < .05$ level. $^*p < .05$, $^{**}p < .01$, $^{***}p < .001$.

Table 4. Summary of Results for Study 2.

Variable	<i>F</i>	η^2	Control	Decline to Respond	Honest Disclosure	Deflection
			<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Surplus (in \$1,000s)	$F(3, 900) = 7.23^{***}$	0.02	3.70 _a (2.20)	3.44 _a (1.94)	0.92 _b (10.65)	3.03 _a (8.88)
Concealment	$F(3, 900) = 115.57^{***}$	0.28	3.89 _a (1.18)	3.14 _b (1.09)	2.04 _c (1.06)	3.62 _d (1.24)
Trustworthiness	$F(3, 900) = 148.76^{***}$	0.33	4.52 _a (1.10)	3.06 _b (1.14)	5.19 _c (1.02)	3.68 _d (1.33)
Likability	$F(3, 900) = 116.65^{***}$	0.28	4.88 _a (1.09)	3.30 _b (1.22)	5.17 _c (1.05)	4.13 _d (1.29)

Table 4. Means in each row with different subscripts were significantly different at the $p < .05$ level. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 5. Summary of Results for Study 3.

Variable	<i>F</i>	η^2	Lie of Commission		Palter		Deflection	
			<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i>	(<i>SD</i>)
Initial Ratings								
Surplus (in \$1,000s)	<i>F</i> (2, 301) = 18.69***	0.11	4.78 _a	(1.65)	4.46 _a	(1.74)	3.31 _b	(1.92)
Concealment	<i>F</i> (2, 301) = 50.92***	0.25	5.23 _a	(1.42)	5.06 _a	(1.30)	3.51 _b	(1.26)
Trustworthiness	<i>F</i> (2, 301) = 26.19***	0.14	4.96 _a	(1.13)	4.41 _b	(1.24)	3.75 _c	(1.19)
Likability	<i>F</i> (2, 301) = 11.02***	0.07	5.03 _a	(1.13)	4.71 _b	(1.12)	4.28 _c	(1.14)
Final Ratings								
Trustworthiness	<i>F</i> (2, 301) = 29.17***	0.16	1.67 _a	(1.08)	2.27 _b	(1.31)	3.01 _c	(1.34)
Likability	<i>F</i> (2, 301) = 16.97***	0.10	2.58 _a	(1.39)	3.24 _b	(1.38)	3.71 _c	(1.38)
Would Negotiate w/ Buyer Again	<i>F</i> (2, 301) = 30.69***	0.17	2.82 _a	(1.68)	3.66 _b	(1.72)	4.66 _c	(1.62)

Table 5. Means in each row with different subscripts were significantly different at the $p < .05$ level. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 6. Summary of Mediation Results

Study	Condition	Ind. Effect	95% Conf. Interval		Ind. Effect	95% Conf. Interval		Ind. Effect	95% Conf. Interval	
		<u>Trustworthiness</u>			<u>Likability</u>			<u>Concealment</u>		
Surplus										
1	Decline to Respond	0.42	[-0.08,	1.24]	-0.19	[-0.77,	0.14]	0.32	[0.11,	0.77]
	Honest Disclosure	-0.27	[-0.73,	0.04]	0.19	[-0.17,	0.63]	0.76	[0.34,	1.44]
2	Control	0.04	[-0.95,	0.42]	-0.28	[-1.27,	0.22]	-0.14	[-0.30,	0.04]
	Decline to Respond	-0.03	[-0.69,	0.31]	0.31	[-0.25,	1.41]	0.24	[0.12,	0.44]
	Honest Disclosure	0.08	[-0.74,	1.59]	-0.39	[-1.72,	0.30]	0.80	[0.49,	1.27]
3	Lie of Commission	-0.25	[-0.56,	0.01]	0.09	[-0.06,	0.28]	-0.99	[-1.41,	-0.67]
	Paltering	-0.14	[-0.35,	0.01]	0.05	[-0.03,	0.19]	-0.90	[-1.25,	-0.61]
		<u>Trustworthiness</u>			<u>Likability</u>			<u>Concealment</u>		
Willing to Negotiation Again										
3	Lie of Commission	0.42	[0.19,	0.68]	0.51	[0.29,	0.81]	0.44	[0.23,	0.71]
	Paltering	0.23	[0.09,	0.45]	0.21	[0.05,	0.43]	0.39	[0.21,	0.64]

Table 6. Comparisons in each row reflect contrasts with the *Deflection* condition. We report the indirect effects using 5000 simulation bootstrap analysis (Hayes & Preacher, 2014; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008).

Table 7. Summary of Tradeoffs of Strategies for Responding to Direct Questions

Strategy	Likability	Economic Outcomes
Honest Disclosure	↑↑	↓
Decline to Respond	↓	↑
Deception (Undiscovered)	↑↑	↑↑
Deception (Discovered)	↓↓	↓↓

Table 7. Summary of the economic and interpersonal costs of the methods of responding to direct questions during strategic disclosure interactions.

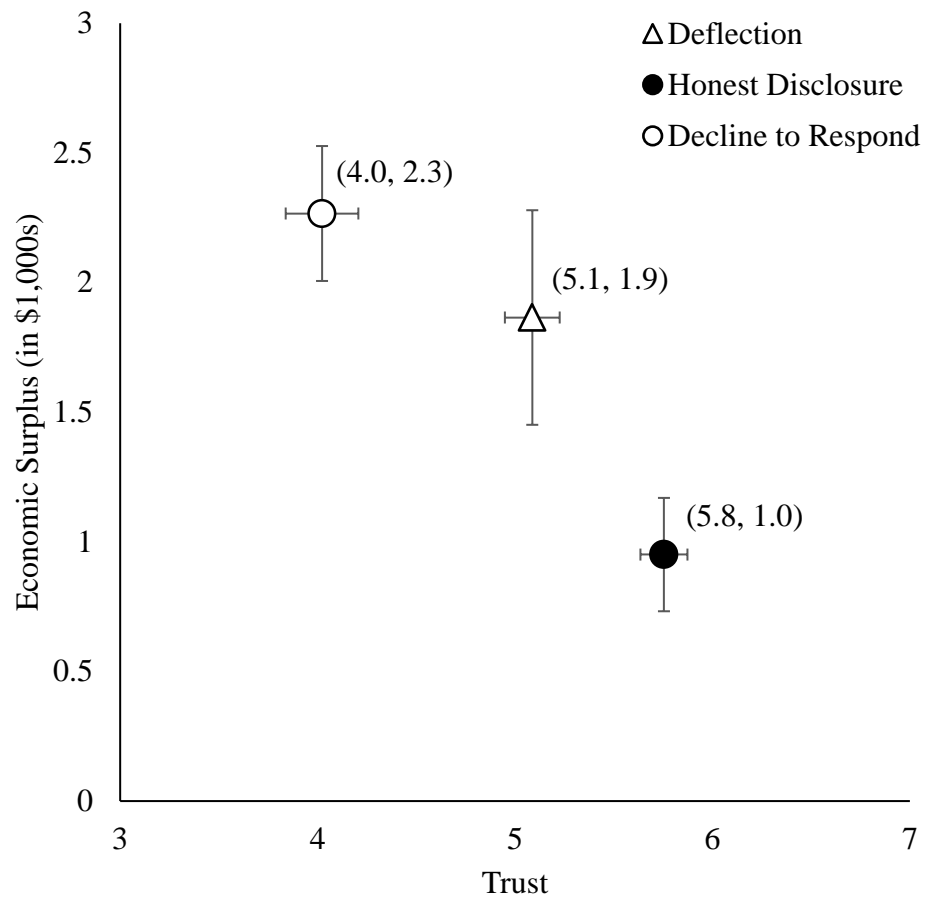
Figure 1. Results for Study 1.

Figure 1. Perceptions of trust and economic surplus in Study 1. Buyers who deflected the question about their collection received greater economic surplus than buyers who honestly disclosed the information about their collection. Buyers who deflected were also viewed as more trustworthy than buyers who declined to disclose information about their collection.

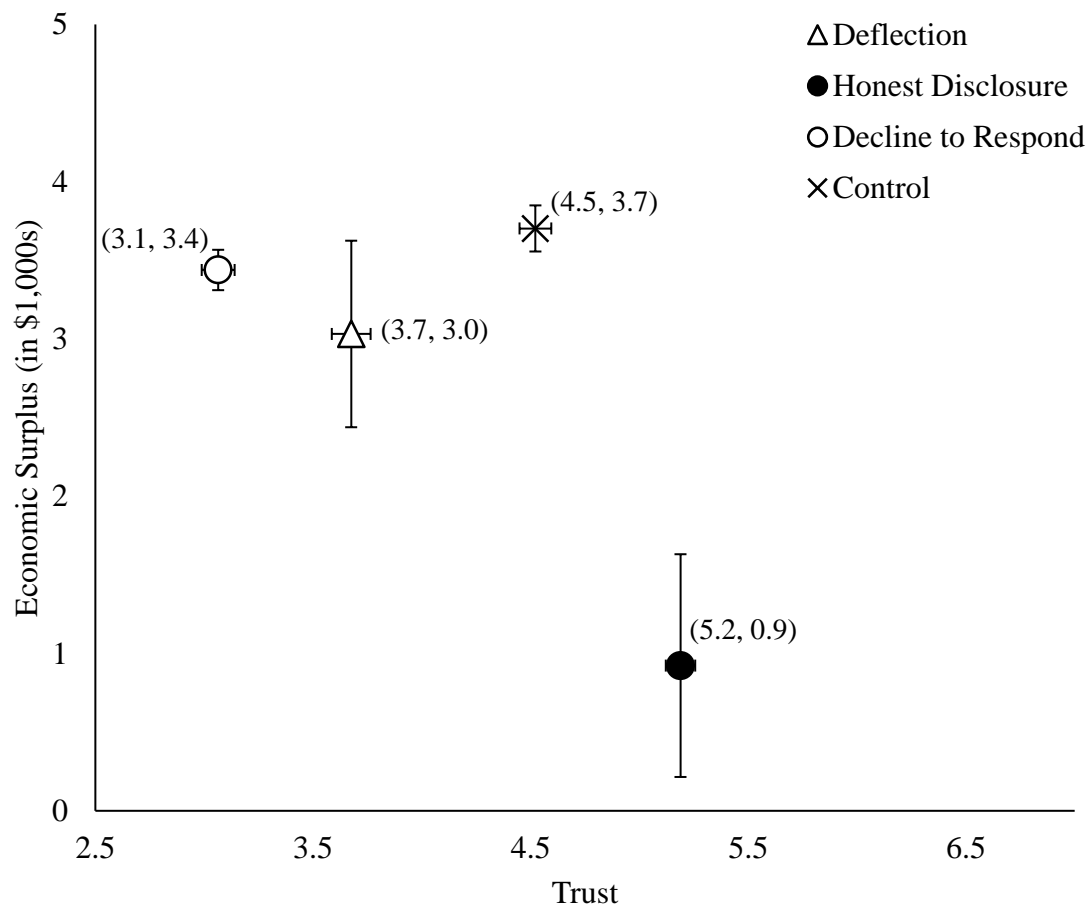
Figure 2. Results for Study 2.

Figure 2. Perceptions of trust and economic surplus in Study 2. Whereas honest disclosure of sensitive information is beneficial for trust, it harms economic surplus. In contrast, declining to respond preserves economic surplus, but harms trust. Deflection preserves economic surplus but is less harmful to trust than declining to disclose.

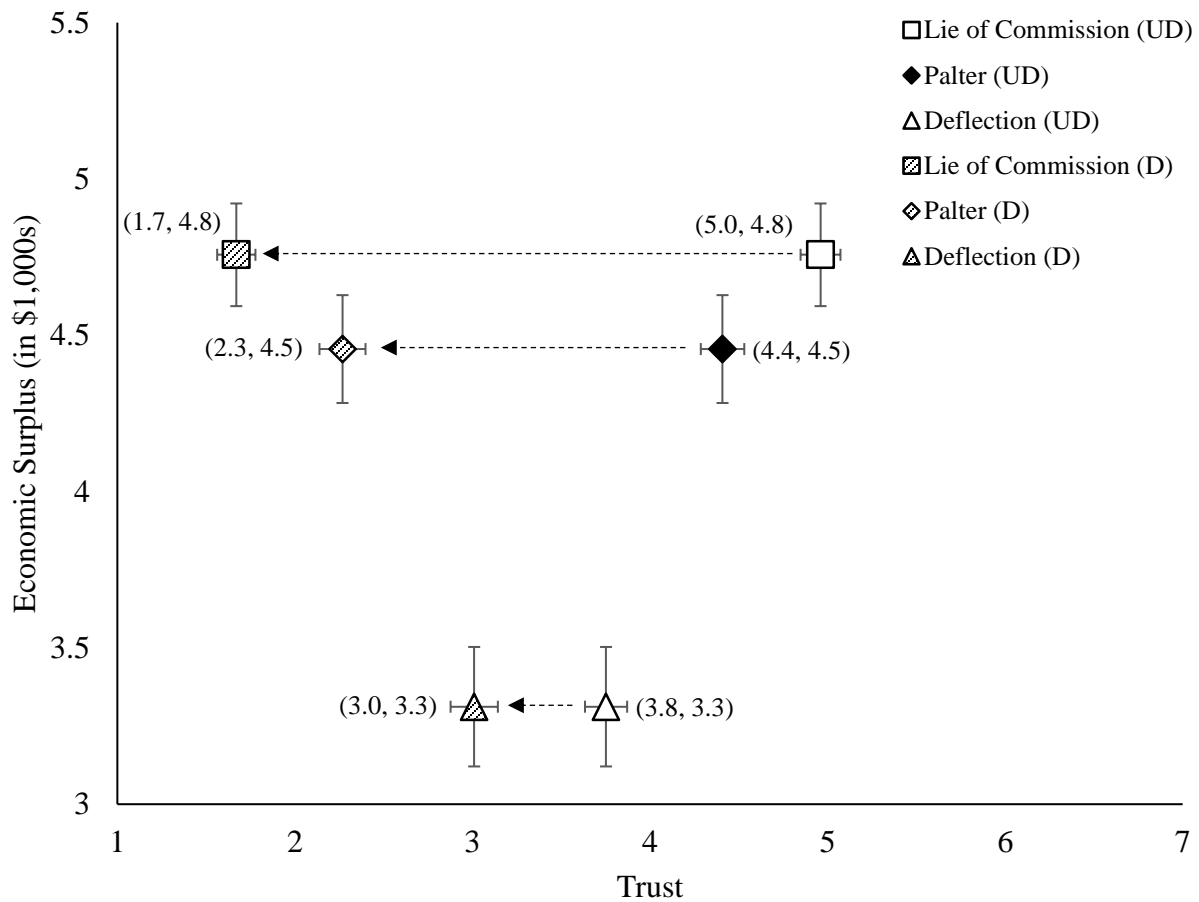
Figure 3. Results for Study 3.

Figure 3. Economic surplus and ratings of trust when the buyer's deception was undetected (UD) and after it was detected (D). If it is revealed that a counterpart did not honestly disclose information, the harm to trust is less severe after deflection than after a lie of commission or a palter. Note: trust was measured before and after the deception was detected.

Appendix A

In each of our studies, we manipulated how an individual responded to a direct question during a strategic disclosure interaction.

Pilot Study

Question: On our way you can tell me how much you were making at your last job?

Decline to Respond: I would prefer not answering.

Deflection: Will the answer impact who pays for the coffee?

Study 1

Question: Do you own other pieces in the series?

Decline to Respond: I'm not prepared to discuss my collection right now.

Full Disclosure: I did purchase the other pieces in the collection.

Deflection: How much do you want for this piece?

Study 2

Question: Do you own other pieces in the bears series?

Decline to Respond: I'm not prepared to discuss my collection right now

Full Disclosure: I did purchase a different Bears piece recently

Deflection: How long have you had the painting?

Study 3

Question: "Do you own any Bear pieces?"

Lie of Commission: "No. I do not have any other Bear pieces"

Palter: "I've been looking to buy one"

Deflection: "Can you tell me more about this piece? What price are you asking for it?"

Appendix B



Appendix C

Seller Instructions in Study 1

Please imagine the following scenario:

You own a small art gallery in New York. Yesterday, you met a potential customer. This one spent a fair amount of time staring at Jim Brine's "Hearts in the Spring," 1969. You would really like to sell that painting. Jim Brine was a pop artist (born in 1945) who produced a lot of work in the 1960's and 1970's. Jim Brine passed away 9 months ago.

You purchased the painting 9 months ago for \$7,000. This particular painting was produced by Jim Brine as part of a set along with: "Hearts in the Winter," "Hearts in the Fall," and "Hearts in the Summer." When you bought the "Hearts in the Spring," 1969 piece you were really hoping to find someone nostalgic for the 1960's who would want this painting.

In terms of comparables for Jim Brine's "Hearts in Spring," 1969, there are a few out there. Another Jim Brine painting (of Hearts he painted in 1972) sold two years ago for \$12,000, but around the same time, one of the Hearts paintings ("Hearts in Summer" 1969) sold for \$7,000 at an auction house. Typically, art prices increase after the artist has died, especially for buyers who want to own all pieces in a series.

Your guess is that the value of this painting could fall anywhere between \$7,000 and \$14,000. Of course, the more you can sell it for, the better. There are two main pieces of information that will influence the offer that you make to a buyer:

1. Whether or not the buyer is an art dealer or a personal collector? If the buyer is an art dealer, they will likely have more information and know about the artist and prior sales prices.

2. Whether or not the buyer has other pieces in the Hearts collection. If a buyer does not have other pieces in Jim Brine's Hearts collection, you expect them to be willing to pay closer to \$7,000. If a buyer does have other pieces in Jim Brine's Hearts collection, you expect them to be willing to pay closer to \$14,000.

Just now, the buyer from yesterday returned to your store. You sure hope to sell the Jim Brine painting!

Appendix D

Confederate Script in Study 1

Introduction

< Hello! Are you a robot? >

If they ask why you asked if they are a robot.

< Just wanted to check. I'm interested in buying the Hearts painting. Can you tell me more about it? >

If they don't ask why you asked, but don't ask you a question.

< I'm interested in buying the Hearts painting. Can you tell me more about it? >

After they ask if you are an art dealer or private collector.

< I'm a private collector. Have you had the piece for a while? >

After they ask if you have other pieces in Jim Brine's Hearts collection.

Deflection: < How much do you want for this piece? >

Disclosure: < I did purchase the other Hearts pieces in the collection. >

Decline to Respond: < I'm not prepared to discuss my collection right now. >

If the P asks again if you have another piece in Jim Brine's Hearts collection.

Deflection: < What's your starting offer? >

Disclosure: < As I said, I purchased the other pieces in the collection. >

Decline to Respond: < As I said, I don't want to discuss my collection. >

If the P asks again if you have another piece in Jim Brine's Hearts collection.

Deflection: < I did purchase the other pieces in the collection. >

Disclosure: < Again, I purchased the other pieces in the collection. >

Decline to Respond: < Again, I don't want to discuss my collection. >

After they make their offer.

< I'm afraid that is more than I expected to pay. Could you do (Initial offer) - \$1,000? >

Accept their next offer.

< I would really like to make a deal, so I'll accept (their last offer). >

If they accept your offer.

< We have a deal. >

If they give an offer outside of the range.

< I'm afraid that is more than I expected to pay. Could you do \$13,000? >

Appendix E

Seller Instructions in Study 2

You own a small art gallery in New York. Yesterday, you met a potential customer. This one spent a fair amount of time staring at Jim Brine's "Panda Bears," 1969. You would really like to sell that painting. Jim Brine was a pop artist (born in 1945) who produced a lot of work in the 1960's and 1970's. Jim Brine passed away 9 months ago.

You purchased the painting 9 months ago for \$7,000. This particular painting was produced by Jim Brine as part of a set along with: "Polar Bears," "Brown Bears," and "Black Bears."

In terms of comparables for Jim Brine's "Panda Bears," 1969, there are a few out there. Another Jim Brine Bears painting sold two years ago for \$12,000, but around the same time, one of the Bears paintings ("Polar Bears" 1969) sold for \$7,000 at an auction house. Typically, art prices increase after the artist has died, especially for buyers who want to own all pieces in a series.

Your guess is that the value of this painting could fall anywhere between \$7,000 and \$14,000. The more you can sell it for, the better, but setting the price too high could cause a buyer to walk away. There is one main piece of information that will influence the offer that you make to a buyer:

Whether or not the buyer has other pieces in the Bears collection.

- If a buyer does ***not*** have other pieces in Jim Brine's Bears collection:
 - You expect them to be willing to pay a lower amount (like \$7,000).
 - Asking a very high price (like \$14,000) could cause the buyer to walk away without making a deal.
- If a buyer ***does*** have other pieces in Jim Brine's Bears collection:
 - You expect them to be willing to pay a higher amount (like \$14,000).
 - Asking a very low price (like \$7,000) could hurt your profit.

Just now, the buyer from yesterday returned to your store. You sure hope to sell the Jim Brine painting!

Appendix F**Negotiation Script in Study 3**

· **buyer**

"Hello - interested in the Bears piece that i saw in the shop today. Today's my last day in NYC on holiday, and I'm considering making a purchase to bring home with me."

· **seller**

"Great to see you, this is definitely one of the best art pieces in my gallery"

· **buyer**

"Hmm... I found the piece hidden in the corner - were you planning to put it in a more prominent position later on?"

· **seller**

"Well, I just wanted to put it close to my office in the corner"

· **seller**

"So that I can see it easily"

· **buyer**

"Ah, understood"

· **seller**

"You know what? Unfortunately the Artist passed away a couple months ago. It's kind of sad. He's a great asset in the pop art industry"

· **seller**

"Do you own other pieces in the bears series?"

Appendix G: Mediation Analyses for Studies 1-3

We conducted both Baron and Kenny (1986) and bootstrap analyses (Hayes & Preacher, 2014; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008) to test for mediation. We report the Baron and Kenny (1986) analysis below and report the results of the bootstrap analysis in Table 6.

Study 1. Perceptions of the likelihood that the buyer had other pieces in the collection mediated the relationship between deflection and surplus (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes & Preacher, 2014; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). When we included concealment ratings in our model, with perceptions of trustworthiness and likability as covariates, and compared the Deflection condition with the Honest Disclosure condition, with a dummy variable for the Decline to Respond condition, the effect of the Deflection condition was reduced (from $\beta = .91$, $p < .05$ to $\beta = .23$, $p = .62$), and the effect of concealment remained significant ($\beta = .52$, $p < .001$).

Study 2. Perceptions of the likelihood that the buyer had other pieces in the collection mediated the relationship between deflection and surplus (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes & Preacher, 2014; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). When we included concealment ratings in our model, with perceptions of trustworthiness and likability as covariates, and compared the Deflection condition with the Honest Disclosure condition, with dummy variables for the Control and Decline to Respond conditions, the effect of the Deflection condition was reduced (from $\beta = 2.40$, $p < .01$ to $\beta = 1.62$, $p < .05$), and the effect of concealment remained significant ($\beta = .51$, $p < .05$).

Study 3. Prior to the deception being revealed, concealment mediated the relationship between deflection and surplus (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes & Preacher, 2014; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). When we included concealment in our model, with initial perceptions of

trustworthiness and likability as covariates, and compared the Deflection condition with the Lie of Commission condition, the effect of the Deflection condition was significantly reduced (from $\beta = -1.44, p < .001$ to $\beta = -0.29, p = 0.26$) and the effect of concealment remained significant ($\beta = .58, p < .001$). When we included concealment in our model, with perceptions of trustworthiness and likability as covariates, and compared the Deflection condition with the Paltering condition, the effect of the Deflection condition was significantly reduced (from $\beta = -1.14, p < .001$ to $\beta = -0.16, p = 0.51$) and the effect of concealment remained significant ($\beta = .58, p < .001$).

After the deception was revealed, perceptions of trustworthiness, likability, and concealment mediated the relationship between deflection and willingness to negotiate with the buyer again (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes & Preacher, 2014; Preacher & Hayes, 2004, 2008). When we included trustworthiness, likability, and concealment in our model and compared the Deflection condition with the Lie of Commission condition, the effect of the Deflection condition was significantly reduced (from $\beta = 1.84, p < .001$ to $\beta = 0.48, p = 0.03$) and the effects of trustworthiness ($\beta = .31, p < .001$), likability ($\beta = .45, p < .001$), and concealment ($\beta = -.26, p < .001$) remained significant. When we included trustworthiness, likability, and concealment in our model and compared the Deflection condition with the Paltering condition, the effect of the Deflection condition was significantly reduced (from $\beta = 1.01, p < .001$ to $\beta = 0.17, p = 0.42$) and the effects of trustworthiness ($\beta = .31, p < .001$), likability ($\beta = .45, p < .001$), and concealment ($\beta = -.26, p < .001$) remained significant.