

Behavior Dynamics Journal

A bi-monthly publication focusing on the Operational Application of Behavior

INVOLUNTARY CUES TO DECEPTION

There is an established body of research on deception (for review see DePaulo, Lindsay, Malone, Muhlenbruck, Charlton, & Cooper, 2003), which reveals varied results on the relationship between behaviors and deception. This is due to a wide array of deception scenarios being studied from “interpersonal lies” (e.g., lying about liking a person you really do not like) to “high-stakes lies” (e.g., the consequences can be death or jail). High-stakes lies are most relevant to a security paradigm, as they represent situations in which the lie is relevant to the liar. The liar is highly motivated to succeed and there are serious consequences for being caught or disbelieved. Liars in laboratory-type experimental studies do not provide exact representations of true high-threat indi-

viduals, as many are untrained subjects generally pulled from a college population. This research underestimates the true proportion of hostile individuals showing suspicious behaviors, as the stakes are much lower in the experimental context. However, even with these limitations, science has uncovered verbal and nonverbal cues that are linked to deception and are currently taught to both practitioners and deceivers around the world. Deceptions are currently taught to both practitioners and deceivers around the world. Lying can be defined as “intentionally misleading another, doing so deliberately, without prior notification of this purpose and without having been explicitly asked to do so by the

target” (Ekman, 2001, p. 28). Lying, regardless of whether it occurs through concealment of the truth or active creation of a false story is cognitively difficult. Signs of added cognitive load, such as hesitations, repetitions, speech errors, contradictions, lack of coherence and reduced gestures, can be observed during interaction, and these cues have reliably distinguished liars from truth tellers in numerous studies. These observable signs are very difficult to control and can provide clues to a person’s true feelings. Further, liars generally exhibit additional “signs of deception” when they become active participants in the deception process. Given the choice, liars are more likely to choose concealment over falsification because concealment is easier, less taxing on the memory and is a passive process. Alternatively, falsification involves active participation from the liar. The liar must fabricate a logical account with consistent details that sounds believable. This in turn, provides further opportunities to detect the lie, as the deceiver responds to unanticipated questions.

Special points of interest:

- An individual attempting to deceive, can experience strong emotions
- Deceivers will feel the need to control their behavior to appear more believable.

NEXT Issue:

Involuntary cues to Deception

VERBAL AND NONVERBAL CUES TO DECEPTION

The available research literature has used a number of different cues for deception across the two different categories; nonverbal and verbal.

Verbal—what an individual says and how they say it; voice pitch, tone of voice, choice of words, details, lack thereof, use of lack thereof.

Nonverbal—incongruent gestures, diminished or no gross body movements, facial expressions of emotion inconsistent with the spoken word.

Verbal cues are associated with the content of the deceptive statement. The more reliable cues that appear consistently in the research of liars are:

Use of more generalizing terms (“always”, “everybody”)
 Make more negative statements
 Use of less temporal and spatial information
 Make less self-references (“I”, “me”)
 Provide statements that lack plausibility

Give shorter answers
 Think more before answering
 Speak in a higher pitched voice (although differences are small)
 Take longer to speak or reply (longer response latencies)
 Rate of speech, mistakes in speech, speech hesitations