

Spring 2020

## Thou Shalt Lie: Anticipatory Deflection Management

Victoria L. Money

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THOU SHALT LIE: ANTICIPATORY DEFLECTION MANAGEMENT

by

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Bachelor of Science  
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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts in

Sociology

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2020

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to recognize the invaluable guidance and mentorship Dr. Matthew E. Brashears provided me on this arduous yet highly rewarding journey. His brilliance, ability to illuminate unearthened corners of theory and research, and his support of my research has shown me that regardless of one's beginning, we are all worthy and capable of great things. Additionally, I would like to express my greatest gratitude to Drs. Laura Brashears and Kaitlin Boyle for their reliable and optimistic contributions to both this project and the development of me as a researcher. Together, my committee, fellow graduate colleagues, and husband have helped make this project a reality.

## ABSTRACT

As people visualize ongoing or future interactions, do they lie to maintain situational congruency? While visualizing various behavioral options, or the outcomes of such behaviors, people have a unique opportunity to preemptively alter the definition of the situation based on anticipated sentiments. Affect Control Theory emphasizes the salience of deflection management in everyday life. This is otherwise known as an attempted realignment of experiences and expectations in the face of situational incongruency such as the bizarre. Using a vignette experiment, I extend Affect Control Theory by illuminating deflection not yet experienced but instead anticipated. I do so by estimating the odds of lying in an ongoing interaction where an honest retelling would incur high deflection. To further inform this cognitive process, I provide qualitative explanations from participants on why they chose their responses and how the dynamics of their relationship mattered, highlighting the underlying social and cognitive processes behind active decision making in ongoing interactions.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Does lying operate as a preventive measure in avoiding or reducing anticipated deflection? Affect Control Theory (ACT) predicts a need for affective congruence between situational elements, such that actors meet cultural expectations when they act in particular ways (Boyle 2017; Heise 2007; MacKinnon and Heise 2010). Deflection, or tension, results when situational experiences are incongruent with an individual's expectations based on cultural expectations. Despite an individual's intrinsic drive for situational congruency (Goffman 1959), deflection can and does happen (Boyle and McKinzie 2015). In such situations, when an individual observes or recalls incongruency, they redefine the behavior (Hunzaker 2016; Nelson 2006) or reidentify the actor or object (Boyle and McKinzie 2015) as a means of reconceptualizing the situation to reduce the deflection. When retelling a highly deflecting interaction, people also change the overall meaning to reflect cultural norms and expectations (Hunzaker 2016). These efforts further reflect the individual's need for situational congruency. But how do individuals behave when they *anticipate* deflection? I posit that when an individual anticipates deflection, the use of deception may function as a means of maintaining, or even achieving, situational congruency.

The purpose of this study is to theoretically establish anticipatory deflection as a person's expectation for situational incongruency in either a future or ongoing interaction that has not yet occurred. When people observe or recall deflection, they seek to redefine

or modify at least one component of the interaction (actor, behavior, object).

Reconceptualization efforts are generally considered post-hoc as the actor is unable to redefine situational meaning in an active interaction (Boyle and McKinzie 2015; Nelson 2006). However, not all highly deflecting interactions are identified only in hindsight, and many are not unanticipated; individuals are capable of visualizing and thus anticipating interactions and or events (Correa, Rao and Nobre 2008). Individuals are also capable of envisioning how their behavior(s) in an interaction may be perceived by others. This implies the existence of an individual's ability to anticipate deflection.

Therefore, individuals may act preemptively to reduce or eliminate deflection that has not yet arisen, rather than only reinterpreting deflection after it appears. Due to the unique nature of anticipatory deflection, it is important to examine alternative deflection reduction measures. As reconceptualization efforts are post-hoc and reflective, behaviors actively used to deter or reduce anticipatory deflection may take on a different form.

Lying may prevent or reduce anticipated deflection by giving the actor a means of manipulating information in favor of their expectations. As such, this study aims to identify lying as a preventative deflection measure. Identifying lying as a strategy for managing anticipatory deflection serves to extend and further inform existing research on deflection in ACT.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Rooted in symbolic interactionism (MacKinnon and Langford 1994), Affect Control Theory predicts an individual's need to maintain the expected definition of the situation. In order to ensure the preferred meaning of a situation, an individual will try to create, or reconceptualize, social interactions to preserve preconceived cultural expectations (Goffman 1959; Heise 2007). Each social interaction consists of three components: Actor, behavior, and object, all within a setting (Boyle 2017; Heise 1979, 2007; MacKinnon 1994). These components, or elements, serve as the collective properties which determine the resulting definition of the situation. Together, the actor, their behavior, and the object of the interaction produce transient sentiments (Heise 1979). This is the individual's experience or impression of each component and the overall interaction (Boyle 2017; Hunzaker 2016).

Although ACT predicts an individual will strive to preserve cultural expectations, their transient sentiments may not reflect their expectations. These expectations, or fundamental sentiments, are culturally agreed-upon feelings about the interaction and affective meaning of the situation (Boyle 2017). Because fundamental sentiments are culturally agreed upon and developed over time, by their very nature they are preconceived expectations and are thus anticipated. When there is incongruity between transient and fundamental sentiments, deflection occurs (Nelson 2006).

Developed by Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum (1967), ACT's mathematical model measures each component of the interaction and the overall impression of the situation using three metrics: Evaluation, Potency and Activity (EPA)<sup>1</sup> using a -4.3 to 4.3 scale<sup>2</sup>(Heise 1979, 2007; Osgood et al 1967; MacKinnon and Langford 1994). Using this model, deflection is then calculated by the sum of squared differences between the EPA score of the transient sentiment and the EPA score of the fundamental sentiment<sup>3</sup> (Hunzaker 2016). To reduce deflection and thus preserve situational congruency, an individual will employ different strategies to reconceptualize the meaning of the situation (Nelson 2006).

An individual will expect that actors, behaviors, and objects in a particular setting will conform to the situation's definition, but fundamental sentiments are not always confirmed by transient sentiments. As a result, people resort to various methods to minimize the resulted deflection. Research to date has indicated that when presented with high deflection-producing situations, participants are most likely to alter perceived behaviors, rather than the actor or the object in the situation (Nelson 2006; Hunzaker 2016).<sup>4</sup> This is perhaps due to the reduced cognitive load from altering the behavior

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<sup>1</sup> EPA is conceptualized using a sliding scale from -4.3 to +4.3. Negative numerical values represent negative evaluation (bad), potency (powerless) and activity (calm). Positive numerical values represent positive evaluation (good), potency (powerfulness), and activity (liveliness).

<sup>2</sup> The -4.3 to 4.3 scale was determined and established using the impression formation equation developed by Osgood et al (1967).

<sup>3</sup> In consideration of the 3-dimensional space, deflection scores are the Euclidean distance between the transient and fundamental sentiments.

<sup>4</sup> Boyle and McKinzie (2015) found that women who have experienced traumatic events, such as sexual assault, commonly reidentified the identity of the actor or object. This process primarily included either adding an adjective or modifying the identity to reflect a past version (thus no longer applicable) of the identity. This difference may be specific to traumatic events.

versus the actor or object (Hunzaker 2016). As the least stable and consistent component of the interaction, behaviors are conceptually easier to change.

## 2.1 GOFFMAN AND AFFECT CONTROL THEORY

Affect Control Theory's focus on maintaining the definition of the situation is heavily influenced by the work of Erving Goffman. Goffman (1959) described the individual's need to preserve situational sentiments through the practice of self-presentation and the intentional shaping of the situation. To avoid emotional discomfort, individuals within social interactions will strive for predictability (Goffman 1959), not only in how the interaction will unfold but also in how their identity will be perceived by others. In the pursuit of such predictability, individuals will often modify their behaviors, actions, or even settings to achieve a desired impression (ibid). These types of modification often occur subconsciously, as people quickly respond to others' facial gestures, shrugs, or subtle comments (Porter and ten Brinke 2008; Willis and Todorov 2006).

ACT uses Goffman's framework as a scaffold for understanding the definition of the situation. However, unlike recent theorizing on the Affect Control Theory of Self (MacKinnon and Heise 2010), ACT focuses on how individuals view the actions of others within situations, rather than how one might choose to modify themselves within them. Despite this difference in focus, researchers in both traditions often discuss modification as being taken for granted (in the case of Goffman), or as part of a largely subconscious system of feedback and control (in the case of ACT). One particularly interesting application of Goffman's concepts of self-presentation and situational

congruence is symbolic interactionist scholarship on everyday lying (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer and Epstein 1996).

## 2.2 DECEPTION AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON

As an integral part of human communication (DePaulo et al 1996; DePaulo and Kashy 1998; DePaulo, Ansfield, Kirkendol and Boden 2004), lying is one of the most obvious forms of deception. Lying, as defined by DePaulo and colleagues (1996), is “intentionally try[ing] to mislead someone,” or distorting information with the intent of misleading another. It has been seen cross-culturally (Levine, Ali, Dean, Abdulla and Garcia-Ruano 2016), and has been documented as occurring daily (DePaulo et al 1996; DePaulo and Kashy 1998).<sup>5</sup> To this end, a large body of research suggests that individuals consciously modify situations through the use of lying (Cole 2001; DePaulo et al 1996; DePaulo and Kashy 1998; DePaulo et al 2004; Millar and Tassar 1988). Despite such commonality, lying carries a negative connotation: from religious texts to laws, lying is often seen as immoral and illegal.<sup>6</sup>

There are clear theoretical connections between studies on lying and Goffman’s discussion of impression management. As a form of impression management, self-presentation allows an individual to align external perceptions with their situational expectations. This is done through the intentional selection of expression; behaving in ways which elicit certain types of perceptions or impressions (Goffman 1959). What situational identity the individual chooses to express depends on the definition of the

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<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, people lie to themselves as well as to others (Adair and Dillion 2013).

<sup>6</sup> Indeed, ACT researchers have found that the evaluation, potency, activity profile of “liar” is -2.62, -1.34, -.17, indicating that people see liars as quite bad, relatively powerless, and not very active.

situation; the identity or expression of self the individual thinks will maintain situational congruency (ibid). Although the selection and enactment of a situational identity does not imply deception, the conscious manipulation of expression to manage impression formation demonstrates a desire to control the definition of the situation. Intrinsic to control and manipulation, individuals who are aware of, and whom are actively calibrating the working consensus of, the situation's definition are acting to achieve their expectations vis-à-vis authenticity of the self. It is reasonable to theorize that in these situations an individual may elect to lie or embellish to achieve these ends.

The connection between lying and the affect control process is also quite clear. Lying to modify situations implies the ability to anticipate both transient sentiments and deflection. This foresight is based on preconceived expectations, or what ACT dubs fundamental sentiments. Despite this, fundamental sentiments in and of themselves do not enable active modification within deflecting situations. They do, however, facilitate visualization of potential interactions. This visualization, or foresight, enables the individual to preemptively decide which behaviors to engage in. It also facilitates the mental exploration of different outcomes based on a variety of behaviors or actions.

When considering the use of deception within an ACT framework, it's important to note that behaviors such as lying may be more situationally congruent than honesty. For example, if engaging in honest behavior is perceived to produce high deflection, it would then be plausible that engaging in dishonest behavior would help mitigate situational incongruency. Thus, as an anticipatory deflection reduction measure, lying provides an individual with the ability to circumvent or decrease deflection by intentionally manipulating information.



### 2.3 DECEPTION, RELATIONSHIPS, AND GENDER

The frequency of lying, and the severity of the lie, varies by relationship type of those in the interaction. People choose to whom they will lie, and about what. Higher rates of lying are typically seen in casual (e.g., acquaintances) and intermediate (e.g., nonimmediate family members) relationships; these lies are often perceived as inconsequential little lies by both the liar and the target of the lie (DePaulo et al 1996; DePaulo and Kashy 1998). In contrast, people rarely lie to those they feel subjectively close to (DePaulo et al 2004). When they do, however, the type of lie is considered “serious” as they are generally used to mask a serious event such as an affair or betrayal (DePaulo et al 2004).

Although DePaulo and colleagues found differences in the severity of lies people told to specific others (relationship based), there were inconsistent results in romantic relationships (non-spouse), and when accounting for interactions with mothers. In both instances, people were more likely to engage in little lies, or self-presentation lies, more often. In fact, college students reported lying to their mothers in almost every other interaction (DePaulo and Kashy 1998). As noted above, people tend to engage in little lies less often with interacting with close others. To account for this inconsistency, it was posited that when interacting with someone whom is higher in power, people are more likely to tell self-presentation lies. In other words, when interacting with romantic partners or mothers, participants may have wanted to impress their partner (romantic), maintain face due to reliance for resources and emotional support (mothers) (DePaulo and Kashy 1998).

Beginning in childhood, people are socialized into gender roles in part through homophilous interactions based on gender (DePaulo et al 1996). Throughout the life course, women are socialized to be more compassionate, emotionally supportive, and agreeable, often focusing on the development and maintenance of close relationships (DePaulo et al 1996). Additionally, in the gender and emotional literature it is well documented that women tend to score higher on self-reported emotional intelligence<sup>7</sup> and empathy measures. All of which may influence how women communicate and interact with others. Perhaps more interesting is the difference between same and opposite-sex interactions. In qualitative studies, warm, empathic and agreeable behaviors were in fact more salient in female-to-female dyadic interactions versus female-to-male or male-to-male (DePaulo et al 1996).

Same-sex interactions between females then lends itself to the question as to whether the rate of lying is predicted to be lower relative to opposite-sex or male-to-male dyads. Possible communal behaviors (i.e., agreeableness) often lend themselves to the development and maintenance of relationships, which could be undermined by the act of lying (DePaulo et al 1996). However, as with the prevalence of lying despite social and legal injunctions, the purpose or utility of lying is not so easily disentangled from morality. Values, such as regard for another's wellbeing, may in fact override negative evaluations of lying and of the liar. Inasmuch, women have been found to engage in more other-oriented lies to preserve the wellbeing of another, often disguising their own

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<sup>7</sup> Emotional intelligence measures such to assess an individual's ability to identify and manage their own emotions as well as recognize and respond to others' emotions in culturally appropriate ways. Gender differences in emotional intelligence measures are may be heavily influenced by gender stereotypes (Lopez-Zafra and Gartzia 2014).

opinions and feelings within the interaction (DePaulo et al 1996). In line with the aforementioned same-sex interaction differences, this effect (i.e., other-oriented lies) was most prevalent in female-to-female interactions relative to others (DePaulo et al 1996). As a communication strategy in preserving the affective meaning of a situation, and thus the emotional wellbeing of another, lying may serve as but one way in which women engage in situational management.

Not dissimilar to same versus opposite-sex interactions, lying to avoid negative consequences (e.g., self-protection) has been found in several studies where the anticipated outcome from being honest is inconsistent from desired expectations (Cole 2001; DePaulo et al 2004; Levine et al 2016; Millar and Tesser 1988). Specifically, when there is perceived risk associated with being honest (e.g., aggression or violence) in heterosexual relationships, lying has been found as a means of not only avoiding harm but also as an attempt to preserve the affective meaning of the situation (Cole 2001). The overall affective meaning hinges on the affirmation of the actor's situational identity and the relationship between the actor and object. It should be noted that in these particular situations, there is an element of risk for one's safety and thus self-presentation lies as discussed above are not the main focus but rather survival. One theme that remains constant in these various types of situations, be it self-presentation or survival, is the liar's ability to distort and thus control what information is received through expression. Control over information means an increased ability to anticipate, react, and control another's impressions or behavior, and thus situational outcomes.

Although it is clear fundamental sentiments are preconceived, the actual experience of deflection may be more potent than anticipated deflection. Regardless of

the type of deflection, be it anticipated or experienced, it is a reoccurring component of life. Furthermore, no matter how impossible a highly deflecting interaction may be theoretically (e.g., rape), they do in fact happen (Boyle and McKinzie 2015). Not only do these types of situations happen, but due to personal experiences, news stories, and social media, people can envision associated affect such as how tense, uncomfortable, or even how traumatic it could or might be. Thus, the question is not *just* do people anticipate deflection, but rather do they use deception to reduce it? Moreover, if lying is a strategy for avoiding deflection, what factors moderate its use? Does perceived closeness between the observer of (object), and actor in, a deflecting interaction increase the observer's propensity to lie to reduce deflection<sup>8</sup>? In turn, when the observer then becomes the actor by responding to their interaction partner, does their perceived closeness with the interactant (now object) also increase their propensity to lie to reduce deflection?

## 2.4 IMPLICATIONS

The literature above extends Goffman's ideas of self-presentation and the drive for situational congruence by incorporating the intentional use of lying. This communication strategy enables the individual to create and control the affective meaning of a situation. As a goal-oriented approach, lying provides the actor with the ability to preserve their identity and the meaning of the situation. When the truth is

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<sup>8</sup> ACT does not currently measure the directionality of deflection. As previous research (Hunzaker 2016; Nelson 2006) focuses on the outside observer reconceptualizing deflecting situations, this study will consider deflection as being experienced by the participant as they will then decide whether to reduce the deflection through reconceptualization efforts. This is not to say that people are not able to anticipate or perceive deflection others may experience.

believed to incur negative consequences (Cole 2001) or is seen as ineffective in maintaining consistent affect (Levine et al 2016), an individual may lie to avoid anticipated deflection.

As a tool, deception operates much like cognitive efforts to reconceptualize uncomfortable situations. As not all interactions are unanticipated, it is plausible that people will also reconceptualize deflecting situations despite knowing they did not misinterpret it. Lying in anticipation of deflection may be used to avoid or minimize conflict and negative affect in subsequent interactions, thus preserving expected situational meaning (Goffman 1959; Lippard 1988; Metts 1989, as cited by DePaulo et al 1996). To illustrate the role of deception in this process, I posit two hypotheses:

- *Redefinition Hypothesis*: People will lie to redefine deflecting situations.
- *Closeness Hypothesis*: The closer an individual feels to the person (actor) creating a deflecting situation, the less likely they will lie to them about their behavior.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS

This study utilizes a 2x2 vignette experimental design. In this design, there are two relationship and two deflection conditions. The relationship conditions are casual and close associates, and the deflection conditions include low and high deflection scores.

Table 3.1 describes each condition in terms of which relationship and deflection condition each participant can be randomly assigned to:

**Table 3.1 Conditions**

	High Deflection Score	Low Deflection Score
Casual Associate	Condition 1	Condition 3
Close Associate	Condition 2	Condition 4

In this experiment, there are two semantically and thematically similar vignettes: Cooking and music. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the vignettes within the conditions presented in Table 3.1. The cooking vignette involves a scenario wherein the participant's associate of choice shares a meal they cooked. The music vignette involves a scenario wherein an associate of the participant's choice shares music they have created. The participant's associate of choice is determined by their assigned relationship condition and is further discussed in the relationship condition section below. The music vignette was included as the cooking vignette may have implied intimacy, real

or desired, whereas these implications should be absent for the music vignette. Although unintended implications of intimacy were a concern with the cooking vignette, both are used for comparison purposes; if both vignettes yield comparable results, then future studies could simply proceed with whichever vignette is most appropriate for that research study. Likewise, if both vignettes yield similar results, then we can conclude those results are more robust against variations in subtext.

This study was administered on Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), a recruitment service for research, opinion polls, marketing, and simple tasks. MTurk has grown in popularity among social scientists due to fast recruitment and quality data (Hunzaker 2016). While it is unlikely that subjects recruited via MTurk represent a valid probability sample of any population of interest, they are nevertheless more diverse than the populations usually sampled for social psychological experiments (i.e., college freshmen). As a result, for experimental research MTurk samples represent a qualitative improvement in external validity, even if they fall short of population level representativeness. Through the MTurk platform I recruited a total of 132 participants. Participants are demographically similar to other studies utilizing this same platform (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz 2012; Huff and Tingley 2015; Hunzaker 2016). The majority of participants were male (64%) and white (69%), aged 39 and below (mean: 30-39, SD: 1). In addition, the majority of participants reported an annual income of \$49,999 or below (46%) despite being highly educated; 28% reported achieving some college, while the mode was a bachelor's degree (34%).

For quality control, if a participant wrote a string of nonsensical letters, provided copied and pasted text (e.g., a paragraph from a book), or website urls, then these were

considered indicative of either a bot or unreliable information. After conducting this quality check, 122 participants were retained. Of these, 62 participants were randomly assigned to the highly deflecting conditions, and 60 participants were randomly assigned to the low deflection conditions. Although these conditions have a similar distribution of participants, there are more participants in the close associate conditions (68) than the casual associate conditions (54) after accounting for those dropped from the study.

The study was implemented using Qualtrics, a commonly used online platform for surveys and experiments. Prior to beginning the experiment, participants were asked to read and then acknowledge a consent form by selecting the 'I Agree' button at the bottom. Participants then answered questions to report their age, race, gender, and income. Following this, participants assessed their self-sentiment by rating "myself as I really am" using EPA metrics (MacKinnon 2015), and then responded to an 18-item HEXAO questionnaire. The HEXACO questionnaire is an extension of the Big 5 (openness to experience, conscientious, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) personality inventory, differing in that it separates neuroticism into two categories: emotionality, and honesty-humility. The HEXACO model was selected specifically because it provides an honesty-humility measure, thus providing a measure for an individual's propensity to engage in dishonest behavior prior to the deflection manipulation, it is therefore preferable to alternatives (e.g., the standard Big 5 or Dark Triad). I incorporated questions designed to measure honesty-humility while selecting filler questions from the HEXACO questionnaire to minimize participant suspicion.<sup>9</sup> If

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<sup>9</sup> There were 18 questions total, 10 (humility-honesty) and 8 randomly selected (at least one per section). These were adopted from the 60-item version of the HEXACO.



participants only answer questions pertaining to honesty-humility, it could unintentionally inform them of the purpose while also priming them.

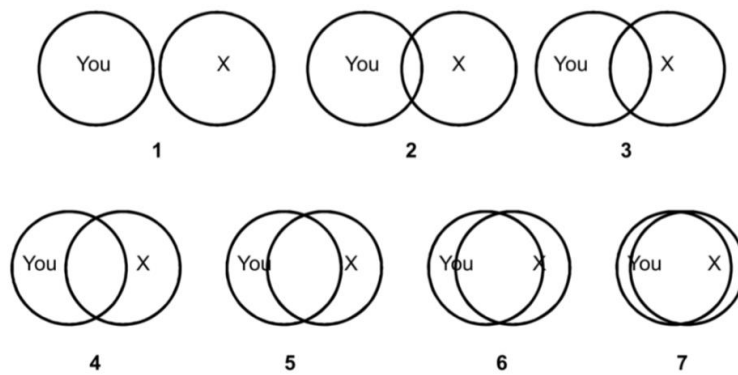
### 3.1 RELATIONSHIP CONDITIONS

Following participant demographics, self-sentiment, and personality traits, respondents were asked to consider two distinct relationship conditions: Casual and close associates. Following DePaulo et al.'s (2004) typology, casual acquaintances consist of coworkers and acquaintances, and close associates consist of best friends, romantic partners, and immediate family members. Participants were assigned to one of these two categories, where they read a description of the level of closeness associated with their assigned condition. In addition, participants were provided with examples of the tie type they should be envisioning for their condition. To maximize the effect of the closeness manipulation, the descriptions not only detailed but also reiterated the level of closeness participants should feel to their chosen tie type. For the casual condition, participants read that casual relationships include people with whom they don't have very strong personal connections, someone to whom they do not feel very close. For the close condition, participants read that close relationships include people they know well and to whom they feel extremely close. Descriptions, examples, and verbiage did not vary by deflection condition. Participants then selected a label for their associate of choice from a dropdown menu which included a list of tie types that were provided as examples.

They then rated their level of closeness with their selected partner using the Inclusion of the Other in the Self (IOS) scale (described below in more detail; see Aron, Aron, and Smollan 1992). The IOS operated as both a manipulation check and as a primer for closeness. As a manipulation check, this measure enabled me to cross check

the respondent's sense of closeness with their assigned relationship condition. If they chose a partner such as a best friend in the close condition and then indicated they were not close on the IOS scale (i.e., a score of less than 4), then that was an indication they either were not paying attention, or that the relationship description was ineffective in priming closeness. If their response to the IOS scale was congruent with the relationship category, then that was an indication the manipulation was effective.

The IOS scale uses visual depictions of relationships as a way of conceptualizing "closeness." Participants were asked to choose the circles best describing their relationship with their interaction partner [X]:



**Figure 3.1 The Interaction of the Other in the Self scale.**

Text provided for participants was as follows:

“In the following figure we ask you to consider which of these pairs of circles best describes your relationship with your [interaction partner] in all questions that follow. In the figure "X" serves as a placeholder for your [interaction partner], that is, you should think of "X" being your [interaction partner]. By selecting the appropriate number please indicate to what extent you and your [interaction partner] are connected.”

After reporting their level of closeness, participants rated their partner's EPA, reported their partner's age and gender, indicated how frequently they were in contact,

and how many associates they shared. These last metrics were included because they capture additional critical characteristics of social ties, including frequency of use and redundancy (Brashears and Quintane 2018). Although frequency of interactions were measured and used a proxy for closeness in previous deception literature (DePaulo and Kashy 1998), here this measure gives further insight into the potential flow and type (i.e., novel or not) of information the participant may give to or receive from their partner. There is a possibility that differences in frequency and redundancy may affect what an individual chooses to communicate with another and how (e.g., if an associate knows other associates, then lies may be more easily discovered). Furthermore, all questions concerning the participant's thoughts about their partner helped prime them for the remainder of the experiment, ensuring that this tie type and their associate were highly present in their mind.

### 3.2 DEFLECTION CONDITIONS

For the second part of this study, participants read a vignette detailing a situation in which their associate of choice creates a product for them to assess. Both vignettes provide participants with a scenario where the context cues indicate that the product shared ought to be positively evaluated. In the low deflection condition, participants are told the product is in fact positively evaluated, thus situationally congruent with expectations formed. Conversely, in the high deflection condition, participants are told that the product is negatively evaluated, thus incongruent with formed expectations.

In both vignettes, the actor, or associate of choice, *shares something with* (2.08, 1.11, .71)<sup>10</sup> the participant, either a meal they have prepared or music they have created. Leading up to the actual sharing of the product (i.e., meal or music), the participant reads clear context clues denoting the actor's passion for their skill. In the cooking vignette, this takes the form of professional presentation of the meal such as elegant plating, herbal garnishing, and decorative glaze. For the music vignette, there are musical instruments, a new speaker system, books on tuning instruments and recording, and communication of their passion for music. Inasmuch, the participant is placed in a situation where the actor appears to have a skill, and where the context cues indicate a sense of competency, or at least investment. The participant should anticipate that the associated skill will yield a positively evaluated product. In the low deflection conditions, the resulting quality of the product is positive (i.e., delicious or awesome), which is congruent with the context cues of the situation. Conversely, in the high deflection conditions, the evaluation of the product is negative (i.e., awful), thus incongruent with context cues of the situation. This information is reiterated in the vignettes to emphasize the evaluation of the product, and to reduce uncertainties or misinterpretations of the situation.

Participants are not presented with fixed response choices as it is challenging or impossible to effectively predict anticipatory deflection scores in order to ensure that each condition is mathematically distinct. Open-ended responses to the vignettes are probable to be positive (e.g., complimentary or supportive), neutral, or negative (e.g.,

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<sup>10</sup> Values following italicized words are the EPA metrics for that word, and are consistently ordered as evaluation, potency, and activity.

insulting or deflating).<sup>11</sup> To establish these two deflection conditions, I rely on whether the resulting quality of the product is consistent with the context cues prior to the final evaluation. In ACT, there is no officially delineated standard for what makes an interaction low or high in deflection. However, Hunzaker (2016) identified 1.06 and 21.38 as low and high values, respectively. Hunzaker (2016) further established categories by identifying deflection scores of and below 3.0 as low, and deflection scores of and above 11.0 as high. As the focus of this study is on deflection the participant anticipates encountering in the *ongoing* interaction, I estimate anticipatory deflection scores per condition (low = congruent, high = incongruent), and then use predicted behaviors (as discussed below) to compare the resulting deflection scores with Hunzaker's convention as a robustness check.

In order to identify predictive behaviors as they compare to participant responses and relate to the vignettes, I utilize the ACT "Interact" software package to explore various options for all four conditions<sup>12</sup>. Developed by David Heise, "Interact" enables researchers to simulate interactions and calculate deflection scores using ACT's impression formation equations (Boyle 2017; Hunzaker 2016). I chose the Indiana 2002 lexicon within "Interact" to find synonymous behaviors within close proximity to the

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<sup>11</sup> Deflection calculations using associated predictive behaviors were not estimated prior to the commencement of the experiment. I instead qualitatively code participant responses to assess the accuracy of this assumption, and to identify salient behaviors as they compare to predicted behaviors discussed below.

<sup>12</sup> Deflection scores are not included from "Interact" due to gender differences in EPA ratings and deflection scores. There were also conceptually incongruent regarding best friends (8.3 and 8.9 when complimenting or praising respectively; female dyads) and casual associates (all deflection scores with both positive and negative behaviors are under 4).

EPA metrics for the actor choices provided in each relationship condition, which did not vary by vignette.

Six behaviors were identified as situationally congruent for honest responses to both deflection conditions. The positively evaluated behaviors used for the low deflection conditions are *appeal to* (1.22, 1.3, .64), *compliment* (2.56, 1.89, .99), and *praise* (2.07, 2.03, 1.07)<sup>13</sup>. These are used as the predictive behaviors for an honest retelling of a positively evaluated product. Appeal to, compliment, and praise are synonymous behaviors which are distinctive sentiments when relaying a positive evaluation. As the contextual cues in the low deflection conditions are reaffirmed by the resulting quality of the product (i.e., delicious or awesome), the honest retelling could be interpreted as appealing to the actor's excitement and complimenting or praising the actor's product/efforts. The qualitative responses for Conditions 3 and 4 (Table 3.1) did in fact include all three predicted behaviors in the free text and feedback responses.

The negatively evaluated behaviors for the highly deflecting interaction are *discourage* (-1.69, -.44, -.56), *deprecate* (-1.85, -.52, -.56), and *insult* (-1.88, -.46, .56). These are used as predictive behaviors for an honest retelling of a product's negative evaluation. Discourage, deprecate, and insult are behaviors associated with negative sentiments, which are thus plausible when relaying a negative evaluation of a highly anticipated product. For example, stating the product was awful (honest retelling) would be closely aligned with one or more of the three negatively evaluated behaviors. This is because the actor and the context clues within the vignette shape the fundamental

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<sup>13</sup> All EPA ratings from the Indiana 2002 lexicon are from the male perspective and/or in relation to male interactants.

sentiment that the product will be positively evaluated. Furthermore, the actor, although nervous and excited, is painted as an individual who is hoping for a positive evaluation of the product by the participant. It is worth noting that conventional deflection has not yet been experienced, thus these predicted behaviors are designed to reflect an individual's foresight. If participants know the product is negatively evaluated but lie in the retelling, it's likely they are visualizing deflection if they instead choose an honest response (i.e., negative evaluation of the product).

After collecting these data, I calculate predicted deflection scores using the 2015 U.S.A. Combined Surveyor Dictionary data from the University of Georgia (Smith-Lovin et al. 2016) for the actor, behavior, and object EPA ratings based on the predicted behaviors above and available identities provided in the relationship conditions. I then compare these to estimated deflection scores using the participants' EPA ratings for themselves and their associates and the predicted behaviors above. As this dataset was not accessed until after data collection, it solely serves to test the theoretical soundness of the predictive behaviors within each condition. I calculated the deflection scores by using a Stata code developed by Brent Curdy which employs a mathematical equation measuring the Euclidean distance between EPA ratings for the actor (A), behavior (B), and object (O) for both the transient sentiments ( $Ae^I$ ) and fundamental sentiments ( $Ae$ ) (Boyle 2016; Heise and Smith-Lovin 1981):

$$\begin{aligned}
 \mathbf{Deflection} = & (Ae - Ae^I)^2 + (Ap - Ap^I)^2 + (Aa - Aa^I)^2 + (Be - Be^I)^2 \\
 & + (Bp - Bp^I)^2 + (Ba - Ba^I)^2 + (Oe - Oe^I)^2 + (Op - Op^I)^2 \\
 & + (Oa - Oa^I)^2
 \end{aligned}$$

As with Hunzaker's (2016) deflection categorization, the deflection scores for highly deflecting situations do in fact fall within the 11.0 or higher range, and the deflection scores for low deflection interactions are indeed 3.0 or lower<sup>14</sup> as is indicated below in Table 3.2.<sup>15</sup>

**Table 3.2 Deflection Scores Comparison**

	<b>Predicted Behavior</b>	<b>Anticipatory Deflection Score 2015 Lexicon</b>	<b>Anticipatory Deflection Score Participant Data</b>
<b>Condition 1 (High/Casual)</b>	<i>Deflate</i>	13.67	19.52
	<i>Deprecate</i>	12.59	18.29
	<i>Insult</i>	15.19	21.40
<b>Condition 2 (High/Close)</b>	<i>Deflate</i>	21.32	27.56
	<i>Deprecate</i>	20.4	26.16
	<i>Insult</i>	23	29.36
<b>Condition 3 (Low/Casual)</b>	<i>Appeal</i>	1.61	1.39
	<i>Compliment</i>	3.57	2.62
	<i>Praise</i>	2.39	1.61
<b>Condition 4 (Low/Close)</b>	<i>Appeal</i>	.81	.91
	<i>Compliment</i>	1.4	1.53
	<i>Praise</i>	.8	.83

<sup>14</sup> Condition 3: *Compliment* is the only exception where the deflection score is over 3.0, yielding a deflection score of 3.57. Data collected from this study will be used as an addition measure in assessing the legitimacy of *compliment* as a theoretically fit behavior for low deflection when considering casual relationship interactions.

<sup>15</sup> *Deflate* (-2.26, 1.08, .53) is used in place of *discourage* as *deflate* is definitionally closer to relaying a negative evaluation of a shared product (gifted). It is, however, semantically similar to *discourage*.



Three items were used to determine whether the participant lied to their partner: their free text response, a quality question, and the reflection question. To prompt the participant's free text response, they were asked, "What do you tell your [interaction partner]?" They were then given the opportunity to type their response. By providing participants with a free text response option, this avoided potential priming for redefinition. Such prompting is typical of many traditional ACT studies (Nelson 2006) but is seen as undesirable here because traditional studies assess reconceptualization which is the deliberation of the interaction *after* it has occurred. As deflection has not yet been experienced, preventative deflection measures have the potential to be qualitatively different. These responses are thematically coded based on situational congruency and deflection management. In other words, participant responses were read and terms (noun or verb) were highlighted for further comparison. Once these words were identified and compared, any salient term seen throughout the responses was noted and compared to the predicted behaviors above. Participant explanations for why they did or did not tell the truth (feedback response) were also read and coded by identifying verbs and expressions that promoted or stressed the relevance of maintaining the definition of the situation. The results are presented below in the qualitative findings section.

Afterwards, participants were asked to evaluate the quality of the product (Quality Question). Answer options provided for the quality question were delicious (meal) or awesome (music), satisfactory, okay, and awful. In Conditions 3 and 4 (table 1), the vignette communicated that the product was either delicious or awesome, thus priming the respondent to positively evaluate the product in the Quality Question phase. In Conditions 1 and 2 (table 1), the quality of the product communicated to the participant

was awful, thus priming the respondent to negatively evaluate the product in the Quality Question phase. This exact terminology was then reiterated throughout the vignette. By using the same terminology in the question, this simultaneously identified those who did not pay attention and confirmed the quality of the product prior to asking whether they were truthful.<sup>16</sup> If the participant indicated the accurate quality of the product but did not communicate this in their free response text, then by their own admission they either withheld or distorted information.

Once participants completed the deflection component of the study, they were asked to provide feedback on their responses. In this feedback section, they answered a reflection question, responded to a motive scale, and then were given the option to ask questions, provide comments or concerns, and to further expand on their choices. The reflection question asked participants whether they truthfully reported the quality of the product to their associate. This was necessary in order to demonstrate that participants were situationally aware in their responses; they acknowledged the product's quality and then whether they retold that honestly to their partner. The terms honest, truth, and truthfully are not displayed in this question. Instead, the participant's previous answer to the Quality Question was piped into the Reflection Question, and they were then asked if they told their partner this: "Did you tell [interaction partner] the [product] was [quality question response]?" There were 4 participants in the low deflection conditions who stated they did *not* tell their partner the product was delicious or awesome despite the

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<sup>16</sup> Although this question also operated as an attention check, no participants were eliminated solely for failing this check. Responses to this question were cross checked with the qualitative data before dropping a participant whom failed the attention check. For example, two participants indicated the product was satisfactory/okay and then reinforced this in the qualitative response and were thus not dropped from the study.

emphasis on exact wording in the vignette. These participants did, however, write that the product was delicious or awesome in the free text response. As such, these were recoded in the reflection question to mirror their qualitative response from dishonest to honest. Analyses with and without these values recoded yielded identical conclusions.

This sequence of questions presents an intentional step-by-step cognitive process where participants responded to their partner, acknowledged the (dis)honesty of their response, and were then given the opportunity to reflect on why they responded the way they did. As such, after reflecting on the accuracy or honesty of their response, they were asked why they communicated [Quality Question response] to their partner. This question utilized a motive scale (described in more detail below) to further explain the cognitive processes behind deflection management tactics. Ultimately, individuals will attempt to reduce high deflection through redefinition efforts, and to maintain or achieve situational congruency based on the actor, behavior, and object. In an ongoing interaction, however, redefinition efforts and motives behind these efforts may be different than post-hoc reconceptualization efforts. This is due to the nature of the interaction as those involved are preemptively working to shape the situation and its anticipated transient sentiment.

## CHAPTER 4

### VARIABLES

#### 4.1 CONTROL VARIABLES

Demographic variables were included as potential control variables as there were no anticipated effects of age, race, or income on an individual's propensity to lie. Critically, as this was an experiment utilizing randomization, individual attributes such as these cannot account for a systematic relationship between my manipulations and lying. Gender, however, was included as a covariate when examining female to female interactions. Prior qualitative work suggests that female to female interactions may include more deception out of a desire to preserve another's feelings than interactions between males, or males and females (DePaulo et al 2004). Due to the specific dynamics of gender in qualitative deception research, the participant's gender as an isolated variable was not anticipated to affect their propensity for lying outside of female to female interactions.

EPA ratings for the participant and their partner of choice were included as continuous covariates. As a covariate, self-sentiment EPA ratings may affect the participant's interpretation of an interaction as the object, as well as influence their

behavior in the following interaction as the actor. Each EPA component was then used as a separate continuous variable ranging from -4 to +4 for each component.<sup>17</sup>

The condensed HEXACO questionnaire utilizes a 5-point Likert scale: *Strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree*. To assess whether an underlying proclivity for dishonest behavior effected participant responses, the honesty-humility question items were condensed into a new, binary variable labeled honest. All strongly agreed or agreed responses indicative of honesty or humility (determined by the question and answer choices), were coded as honest. Reverse coded questions where strongly disagree or disagree were indicative of honesty or humility were also coded as honest. Neutral responses were omitted from this variable as they were not clearly indicative of either behavior. As such, all responses incongruent with honest or humble behavior as indicated by the question were coded as dishonest.

#### 4.2 EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATIONS

To establish whether closeness moderated the effect of high deflection on an individual's propensity to lie, closeness variables were created using the relationship condition the participant was assigned to, the IOS scale, and two network measures. To examine the effect of closeness as a moderating variable, the relationship conditions were used as the primary moderating variable. This was not based on Table 3.1 but instead simply whether the participant was in the casual or close relationship condition regardless of their assigned deflection condition. In addition, the IOS scale, primarily a primer and manipulation check, was used as an ordinal variable ranging from 1 to 7 (not close to

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<sup>17</sup> There are three control variables for self-sentiment: self-evaluation, self-power, and self-activity. Likewise, for the participant's partner: other-evaluation, other-power, other-activity.

very close). As this was the level of closeness participants reported, it examines the effect of closeness of lying net of relationship condition. Although subjective closeness influences whether someone is likely to lie to their associate (DePaulo et al 2004), the IOS measure did not appear to reproduce that effect.

In addition to these variables, network measures were included to provide additional information on the relationship between the participant and the tie type they chose. While network measures may not indicate subjective closeness like the IOS scale, or report the specific condition participants were assigned to, they do provide an additional means to measure characteristics of network ties often thought to be associated with closeness (Brashears and Quintane 2018). The number of shared associates provides insight into the redundancy of information shared between the participant and their interaction partner. This coupled with frequency of contact paints a picture of not only what type of information may pass between the participant and their partner but also an estimation of how much time elapses between interactions (ibid). Although this does not measure closeness or sentiment, it does provide insight on the flow of information and perhaps cognitive calculations on *how* to communicate that information. If the participant shares a large number of associates with their partner, and or they are frequently in contact, that may change their propensity for honest or dishonest communication.

To this end, network measures were included as a secondary closeness measure assessing structural closeness and interaction. These measures included a scale for frequency of contact and shared associates. Frequency of contact refers to how often the participant is in contact with their partner ranging from *multiple times a day* to *I have no regular contact with this person*. Values for this variable included options for both once

and several times a [time increment: day, week, month, year]. This variable was then measured in days a year ranging from 0 (no regular contact) to 547.5 days (multiple times a day) as a conservative estimate. The shared associates variable refers to how many associates the participant shares with their partner. This measure provided 7 ordinal values for participants ranging from 1 (*they know none of the people I know*) to 7 (*they know everyone I know*). In addition, each of these response options was accompanied by an incremented range of percentages from less than 10% to more than 90%. These network measures provided a continuous variable (frequency of contact) and an ordinal variable (shared associates).

As the primary independent variable, deflection was included as a binary variable indicating which deflection condition participants were assigned to: Low or high. As the low deflection conditions involved situations congruent with articulated fundamental sentiments, it was not anticipated that the interaction would affect an individual's propensity for lying. Positive evaluation of the product in the low deflection conditions was expected regardless of the actor (participant's partner of choice) as it would promote situational congruency.

The dependent variable for this study is whether the participant lied. This was measured using responses to the quality question after being cross checked with the participant's free text response to the interaction. Responses were either honest or dishonest based on the participant's report of their product evaluation. If the response to the quality question was incorrect based on condition, then it was considered a lie. As a precautionary measure, feedback responses were cross checked with the quality question and free text responses. There were 2 participants who clarified their quality question

response, stating they either did not remember the quality, or that they were not dishonest in their response though they acknowledged they were not completely honest either (i.e., they would not tell their partner the product was awful but they did communicate it was subpar).

The motive scale, adopted from Levine et al (2016) pan-cultural study on lying, was incorporated as a secondary measure for underlying motives behind individual responses.<sup>18</sup> Answer options included: protection of self, protection of other, personal advantage, economic advantage, to harm, to avoid, to appear favorable, no motive or reason, and out of politeness. As a nominal variable, each value will be coded as a separate ordinal variable ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*to a great extent*).

Although there was no ‘other’ option, participants were provided with a free response text for feedback. This feedback question asked, “Before being thanked and debriefed for your participation, if you have any questions, comments or concerns, or if you would like to further expand on any of your responses, please use the box below to do so”. This provided participants with the opportunity to explain, clarify, or voice any feedback they might have, or to include whether the scale prior provided insufficient options. Although no participants indicated the motive scale was insufficient in the feedback response, 9 participants did use this feature to further explain their responses and behaviors in more detail.

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<sup>18</sup> Not all items were used as some were not relevant to situation (e.g., personal transgression such as covering up a mistake or misdeed).



## CHAPTER 5

### ANALYTIC APPROACH

To analyze these data, I use a logistic regression model to measure the effect of anticipated high deflection in an ongoing interaction. The dependent variable, whether the participant lied, is measured as a binary variable (0 = no, 1 = yes); calculated using participants' answers from the Reflection Question. By creating this initial binary variable, I am able to compare the occurrence of lying across conditions. The independent variables are the deflection and relationship conditions, coded as binary variables (0 = low, 1 = high; 0 = casual, 1 = close, respectively). To test my Redefinition Hypothesis, I fit a logistic regression model of lying on the deflection condition, the relationship condition, gender, race, age, income, self-evaluation, self-power, self-activity, proclivity for honesty, and female dyads (Model 1). To further assess closeness on the propensity for lying, I run the same model with the IOS measure in addition to the relationship condition variable (Model 2). As a final baseline model for examining variables either indicative of or similar to closeness, I run the prior model with frequency of contact and shared associates while omitted the IOS measure (Model 3).

For the Closeness Hypothesis, I run Model 1 with an interaction between the deflection and relationship conditions (Model 4). If there is an interaction effect between the relationship (closeness) and deflection on the propensity to lie, then this would show that closeness moderates the effects of high deflection on lying. To further examine the dynamics of female to female interactions on an individual's propensity to lie in highly

deflecting interactions, I run another logistic regression model of lying on deflection, relationship, the control variables, covariates, and with an interaction between frequency of contact and female dyads (Model 5). Frequency is used to assess the rate of contact and thus the rate of potential communication between the participant and their partner as this may also impact what information is shared and how it is communicated.

I thematically code the free response text options to identify redefinition efforts, as well as the use of positive and negative terms. This further informs why and how people choose to manage anticipatory deflection by showcasing rationalization efforts in the moment. Because participants are asked if they were truthful with their partner after they complete the free text response in the retelling, and then are asked to expand on why, this also provides rich data on the cognitive processes behind anticipatory deflection reduction measures.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS

After collecting these data, I calculate deflection using self-sentiment ratings from participants for comparison to deflection estimates calculated using an existing dictionary. Variables are generated based on participant self-sentiments (averaged individually: E, P, A) as the actor in the retelling, an identity congruent with the type of relationship (condensed by relationship category: casual or close) as the object, and the six predicted behaviors (2015 lexicon). The relationship variables are calculated by estimating the means of EPA ratings given for each tie type within their applicable condition (i.e., acquaintance and coworker for casual). Deflection scores calculated from these data closely match those of the 2015 U.S.A. Combined Surveyor Dictionary, confirming the validity of my measurements. Though these scores do not significantly differ, the high deflection conditions (Conditions 1 and 2) yielded higher deflection scores than those calculated using the 2015 lexicon. In addition, *compliment* in Condition 3 produces lower a deflection score using these data and is firmly within the parameters of Hunzaker's low deflection category.

#### 6.1 LOGISTIC REGRESSION RESULTS

I use a logistic regression model to measure the effect of anticipated deflection in an ongoing interaction. To demonstrate anticipated deflection management, participants write a response to the vignette, report the quality of the product, and then indicate whether they were honest in the retelling. Odds ratios were presented below, however, in

Table 6.1, logged odds ratios are presented along with standard errors and stars for significance.

To test my Redefinition Hypothesis, I fit a logistic regression model of lying on the deflection condition, relationship condition, gender, race, income, education, age, self-evaluation, self-power, self-activity, proclivity for honesty, and female dyads (Table 6.1, Model 1). In Model 1, the odds of lying in the high deflection condition are 1163 times higher ( $p < 0.001$ ) than the odds of lying in the low deflection condition. In fact, these odds are reproduced in all models (Table 6.1). Model 2, as indicated in the section above, shows that subjective closeness as reported in the IOS measure is not significantly correlated with lying. However, in all models, being placed into the close relationship condition appears to be significantly correlated with a decrease likelihood in lying. Similarly, Model 3 also does not indicate a significant correlation between frequency of contact or shared associates and the propensity to lie.

## 6.2 INTERACTION

Due to highly nonsignificant p-values in Models 1 through 3, race, education, income, and female dyads were omitted from further analyses to conserve power. To test my Closeness Hypothesis, I ran Model 1 (trimmed) with an interaction between the deflection and relationship variables (Model 4). The findings are nonsignificant, and this model is omitted from Table 6.1 as I was unable to estimate this effect due to insufficient degrees of freedom.<sup>19</sup> Additional models with interactions between deflection and various measures for closeness are also nonsignificant.

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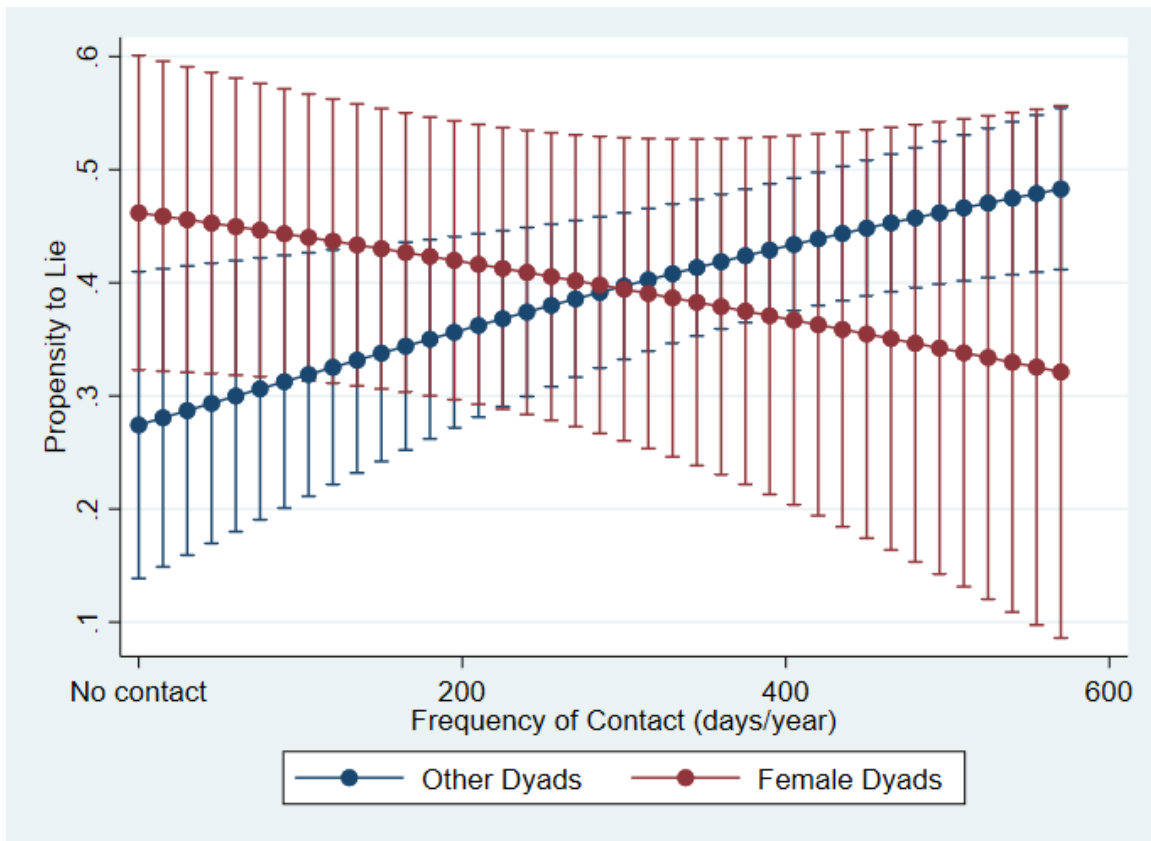
<sup>19</sup> In Condition 4 (Table 3.1), all participants told the truth in the retelling.

In Model 1, female to female interactions are nonsignificant. However, when examining interactions between female to female interactions, such as with frequency of contact, there does appear to be a correlation between increased frequency of contact and a reduced likelihood of lying in highly deflecting interactions, though it is nonsignificant (Model 5). The odds of lying in the highly deflecting condition for female to female interactions when moderated with increased frequency of contact is .99 times ( $p < 0.101$ ) lower than in other dyadic interactions. Furthermore, the odds of lying in the high deflection condition then become 3,181 times ( $p < .001$ ) higher than in the low deflection condition. For comparison, I omitted the HEXACO measure for honesty and shared associates in Model 6 due to high nonsignificance ( $p < 0.698$ , and  $p < 0.675$  respectively). This resulted in the female dyad and frequency of contact interaction to have a decreased p-value from 0.101 to 0.056. Although this is still nonsignificant, it may indicate that a larger sample size would yield significant results. To illustrate these predictions above, I provide a model comparison model in Table 6.1, and a marginal plot of the effect of frequency of contact on the propensity to lie for both female to female dyads and other dyads in Figure 6.1.

**Table 6.1. Model Comparison**

	Model 1 Baseline	Model 2 IOS Scale	Model 3 Network Measures	Model 5 Interaction Effect	Model 6 Interaction Effect
Propensity to Lie					
Deflection Condition (bin:1=high)	7.058*** (1.538)	7.063*** (1.497)	7.539*** (1.559)	8.065*** (1.676)	8.127*** (1.692)
Relationship Condition (bin: 1=close)	-1.951* (0.971)	-1.914* (0.939)	-2.464** (0.952)	-2.891** (1.073)	-2.794** (1.045)
IOS Scale	0.122 (0.230)	0.118 (0.225)	- -	- -	- -
Frequency of Contact	- -	- -	0.00256 (0.00178)	0.00507* (0.00245)	0.00521* (0.00236)
Shared Associates	- -	- -	0.269 (0.267)	0.113 (0.291)	- -
Female Dyads x Freq.	- -	- -	- -	-0.00794 (0.00483)	-0.00873 (0.00458)
Gender (bin:1=female)	0.986 (1.021)	0.896 (0.709)	0.939 (0.733)	0.490 (1.075)	0.446 (1.039)
Race (bin:1=white)	-0.0901 (0.792)	- -	- -	- -	- -
Income	0.0477 (0.257)	- -	- -	- -	- -
Education (by degree)	0.110 (0.373)	- -	- -	- -	- -
Age	0.185 (0.368)	0.145 (0.350)	0.363 (0.404)	0.188 (0.418)	0.164 (0.375)
Self-Evaluation	-0.551 (0.353)	-0.574 (0.311)	-0.685* (0.339)	-0.628 (0.337)	-0.601 (0.329)
Self-Power	0.464 (0.253)	0.493* (0.227)	0.567* (0.237)	0.623* (0.258)	0.615* (0.256)
Self-Activity	-0.452 (0.246)	-0.462 (0.247)	-0.506 (0.265)	-0.536 (0.281)	-0.552* (0.269)
HEXACO (bin:1=honest)	0.448 (0.924)	0.388 (0.887)	0.562 (0.952)	0.426 (1.015)	- -
Female Dyads	-0.224 (1.152)	- -	- -	2.372 (1.768)	2.580 (1.700)
_cons	-5.390* (2.388)	-4.739** (1.703)	-6.656** (2.197)	-6.489** (2.210)	-5.851** (1.844)
<i>N</i>	122	122	122	122	122

Standard errors in parentheses \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$



**Figure 6.1 Interaction Plot. As frequency of contact increases, female to female interactions show a decreased propensity to lie in highly deflecting situations.**

### 6.3 MOTIVE SCALE AND QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

At the end of the study participants respond to a motive scale denoting why they chose their responses regardless of condition. Of these options, for the protection of others was significantly correlated with the propensity to lie ( $p < 0.001$ ). This helps to provide insight for underlying cognitive processes as participants underwent their decision making when responding to their interaction partner. Furthermore, this may be indicative of striving to maintain situational congruency and relationship expectations. Even though many people would likely report that lying is unethical, it appears that behavioral norms may in fact demand falsehood in relatively common situations. Due to the order of operations, it would be inappropriate to include this variable into a logistic

regression model. However, when done, the female dyad and frequency of contact interaction become significant ( $b = -0.01, p < 0.037$ ). I cannot report on these metrics as being sound or reasonable in explaining the relationship between female to female interactions and lying. The notion, however, that women are more emotionally conscientious and willing to protect others or preserve their emotions over the moral “good” action of honesty does appear to be upheld here even if only as a post-hoc rationalization of events.

To better understand this process, the free text responses following the vignette are thematically coded based on ACT and deflection management efforts (i.e., redefinition). To do so, each answer to the question, “What do you tell your [interaction partner]?” was read, and each noun or verb pertaining to the actor, behavior, or object was highlighted and compared. This process included separating responses into categories denoting positive support, neutral or avoiding, negative feedback, and a final one for combined themes (e.g., a response that provided negative feedback and positive support). All participants provided responses to this prompt ranging from a few words (e.g., “It was okay”) to short paragraphs explaining the response. The result provides little evidence of traditional redefinition efforts. Instead of redefining the actor (their associate of choice), the actor’s behavior, or the object (themselves) as was expected, the most salient theme is positive support such as appealing to, complimenting, or praising the actor where participants provided responses such as, “I tell them I love it and it is amazing,” or, “The food is great! I am glad that you invited me.”

Although participants correctly identify whether they lied, the majority state they would use constructive criticism while also complimenting their partner’s efforts, with



special focus on how their partner had “worked hard.” This emphasis was seen in comments such as, “I would tell her it was good. She went through all the trouble of making something, I couldn't hurt her feelings. If she keeps practicing, she will get better. Maybe I would just suggest that she keep making dishes,” and, “I tell her they did a really good job and worked hard. I will let her know that this is not my favorite genre of music, but I can tell that she worked very hard on this.” What this illustrates is a desire to manage deflection in a manner that upholds social norms such as politeness, or reserving another’s feelings or self-image, which in turn helps to maintain situational congruency.

Other responses justify lying by stating in the feedback portion of the study, “It’s best to be honest with your opinions, but delivery is always the most important part to avoid unnecessary conflict,” further denoting forethought and the ability to anticipate future consequences. Although some seek to avoid or deter deflection in general, others explicitly demonstrate a desire to reduce the deflection experienced by their interaction partner, “I think it’s not always necessary to be blunt with people. Sometimes if you can avoid being direct about something then you can avoid hurting someone. I just don’t think it’s worth hurting someone in the long run.”

When assessing the impact of closeness, both the relationship manipulation and the IOS measure failed to yield significant results. To explore other avenues of measuring closeness between the participant and their partner I include an analysis with network measures. Only one participant noted the salience of their network when explaining their chosen response to the vignette, “I should add that I'd feel very uncomfortable in that situation as the acquaintance is very close friends with my close friends.” The relationship condition, however, indicated that when an individual is anticipating high

deflection when interacting with a close tie, they are less likely to lie, which is congruent with the findings from DePaulo et al (2004). This differentiation between whom an individual is interacting with when anticipating high deflection was also identified in the following feedback free text responses:

“I would definitely say it was really good. The relationship isn’t as critical where I wouldn’t have to back up the lie.”

“The acquaintance and I both have a background in music production, so I think it'd be a lot easier for me to be honest with them, though this is probably not the norm.”

“This whole situation really depends on the specific person. I am close to many people I would absolutely lie to? and say it was fine and others I would not.”

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Anticipating deflection in ongoing social interactions enables people to manipulate or alter events prior to the event's commencement. While individuals cannot unilaterally control the future, they can employ deception as a means of stacking the deck to disfavor the emergence of deflection. Traditional ACT studies have provided valuable insight into how people manage deflection through reconceptualization efforts. These tactics are specific to deflection management when recalling past experiences, or in considering events where the participant as the observer does not have a personal connection with the actor or object. This form of management acts as a means of preserving fundamental sentiments through the reconceptualization of transient sentiments. It does not, however, capture deflection management efforts in active, ongoing interactions. Nor do traditional methods provide insight into whether people will use deception as a reduction or preventative measure. By presenting participants with a situation wherein telling the truth incurs high deflection, I demonstrate that people actively anticipate deflection and act in advance to shape the situation. In addition, people do in fact lie to prevent anticipated deflection as a means of achieving situational congruency.

Although subjective closeness (IOS scale) does not appear to moderate the impact of high anticipatory deflection on the propensity to lie, being placed into the close

relationship condition is negative correlated with lying. As such, it does appear that closeness in the form of relationship types do affect an individual's propensity to lie, though it does not appear to impact the rate of lying nearly as significantly as a highly deflection situation. Of the network measures, frequency of contact appears to be significantly correlated ( $p < 0.039$  Model 5, and  $p < 0.027$  Model 6, Table 6.1) with lying, while also moderating the propensity to lie in female to female interactions, although this interaction was not significant. As noted by the deception literature, female to female interactions appear to have an increased rate of lying as a form of emotional management and in consideration of those involved. I show that as frequency of contact increases, lying in female to female interactions decreases in comparison to other gender dyad combinations (i.e., male to male, female to male, and male to female). As this effect is only significantly illuminated when including the motive scale variables (i.e., protection of others), it may be possible that females are more cognizant of emotion management with those with whom they are in communication most frequently (Hochschild 1979).

This study adds depth to both the ACT and deception literatures by empirically showing the presence of anticipatory deflection and lying as an anticipatory deflection reduction measure. Furthermore, these findings provide insight into why despite social, religious, and legal injunctions, lying remains an everyday occurrence. When an individual anticipates high deflection, there is a high likelihood that they will lie regardless of who their interaction partner is and in spite their self-reported propensity for honesty. What this reinforces is the consequence of situational incongruency and the drive to rectify it through deflection management. The ways in which participants communicated their responses did not highlight malicious intent. Instead, they chose to

either compliment/praise their partners without criticism to avoid “unnecessary conflict.” In addition, they emphasized the importance of their partner’s efforts while explicitly supporting further exploration and practice. This demonstrates the finesse of human communication within highly deflecting situations. More specifically, it informs how ongoing interactions qualitatively differ in deflection management efforts from post-hoc reconceptualizations. Navigating through these interactions while trying to maintain situational congruency is an important element to understand as it helps to shed light on the complicated nature of human communication.

Although participants lied in highly deflecting interactions, they did not redefine or relabel the actor, behavior, or object. Definitionally, reconceptualization assumes a reflective nature after experiencing or being exposed to a situation. As such, when avoiding or reducing potential deflection, an individual, specifically one actively engaged in the situation, may lie and then redefine the interaction later. Aside from the traditional conceptualization of redefining highly deflecting interactions, it is possible that participants did in fact redefine the identity of their partner without explicitly stating so. As the majority of participants encouraged their partner to continue working on their newfound passion, it is plausible that the partner’s identity was redefined from their tie type to that of a neophyte or novice.

Future studies should compare anticipatory deflection management with post-hoc reflections of that event as it may further inform both proactive and reactive strategies. In other words, individuals may avoid deflection both by lying to prevent it from emerging, and then subsequently redefine the situation or their behavior to minimize the deflection generated by the acknowledgement of lying. Future research should also seek to examine

high deflection situations where there are potential personal and economic risks when deciding responses in ongoing interactions. In addition, it would be highly beneficial to demonstrate how lying in ACT is necessary to maintain situation congruency due to unrealistic expectations (e.g., stating you did not rape your romantic partner). Finally, future papers should examine whether explanations for lying given by responses follow previously established findings in ACT; having engaged in the deflecting behavior of lying, we might reasonably expect these explanations to show evidence of redefinition in order to further manage deflection.

Expanding this line of research would help develop deflection management efforts by establishing active behaviors versus post hoc reconceptualizations. If there are common themes that emerge in the free-response item, that information could provide quantitative selection options that could be used in larger studies. The quantitative response options could be displayed as a multi-part response where participants choose how to structure their responses based on the options provided. This structuring would help illuminate the different types of deception outside of the intentional manipulation of information to mislead (i.e., lying).

This study began by asking the question do people anticipate deflection, and if they do, will they lie to manage it. Although participants did not redefine deflection in the traditional sense by explicitly stating their partner's identity or specific behavior, they did encourage continued efforts and constructive feedback. The Quality and Reflection Questions, in addition to the motive scale and feedback free response, demonstrate an individual's ability to not only anticipate deflection (honest retelling of a negatively evaluated product) but also of the underlying rationalization processes invoked when

choosing to lie to reduce said deflection. As such, participants lied robustly in the high deflection conditions regardless of tie type or a report high proclivity for honest behavior. Lying, it appears, is but one form of human communication utilized to maintain not only situational congruency but also a balance between conflicting expectations such as honest disclosure and emotion management.

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## APPENDIX A

### VIGNETTES

*Relationship Conditions: Casual and Close*

*These descriptions provide information pertaining to the associated condition as follows:*

Within our everyday lives, we interact with a variety of different people. Some of these relationships can be considered casual/close. Casual/Close relationships involve people whom we do not have strong personal connections to/feel extremely close to. They can be strangers, acquaintances, or even co-workers we aren't friends with/This can include relationships with people such as best friends, romantic partners, or immediate family members (e.g., parents, siblings, or children).

For this study, we ask that you think of someone you have a casual/close relationship with. Someone you may or may not know/know, but whom you do not feel very close to/whom you feel extremely close to. Below you will find a dropdown menu of relationship types that are seen in casual/close relationships. Please select someone you do not feel close to/feel extremely close to:

## *Cooking Vignette*

*This vignette manipulates relationship type (casual/close) and the degree of deflection (low/high) to determine redefinition/response to the encounter.*

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**Please read the following short story and imagine your [casual/close] in this situation. Imagine what it would be like to experience this situation, and then answer the following questions.**

Your casual/close recently finished a renowned culinary class and is excited to show off their new skills. After work one day, they tell you about some of the fancy meals they had to prepare, and about how delicious everything was in hopes of piquing your interest. They then ask you if you're free Saturday evening, offering to make you one of their favorite dishes. You have nothing planned and accept.

\*Timed, hit next button.

Saturday evening arrives. You baked one of your family's praised desserts and show up at your casual/close's house as they make the finishing touches on their dish. As you both sit down at the table, your casual/close plates the dishes and everything looks like it belongs in an expensive restaurant. There is herbal garnishing and sauce decoratively drizzled on the plate. Surrounding the plate are various small bowls with items you can add to the main course. Inside these small bowls you see creamy goat cheese crumbles, blueberries, coarse sea salt, and a balsamic vinaigrette. In the center of the table are four chilled bottles containing sparkling water, white wine, regular water, and a pale ale. Your casual/close beams at you with pride over their creation and says, "Bon appétit!"

\*Timed, hit next button.

You laugh because you see your casual/close watching you in nervous anticipation. You reassure them it's probably delicious and thank them for inviting you over. As you take your first bite you notice the food is awful, dry and bland, most likely overcooked [**simply delicious with the perfect mix of herbs, cooked to perfection**]. You take a few more bites just in case but find it all to be disappointing [**and to your delight every bite is even better than the last**]. Your casual/close says to you, "I'm so excited to share this with you! What do you think??"

\*Timed, hit next button.

*Redefinition Free Response.* What do you tell your [partner]?

## *Music Vignette*

*This vignette manipulates relationship type (casual/close) and the degree of deflection (low/high) to determine redefinition/response to the encounter.*

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**Please read the following short story and imagine your [casual/close] in this situation. Imagine what it would be like to experience this situation, and then answer the following questions.**

Your casual/close recently purchased new software to help them create and record music. After work one day, they tell you about how they've managed to put together a few songs and how excited they are about how it's sounding. They ask you if you're busy Saturday, and if you'd be interested in listening to what they have so far. You have nothing planned and accept.

\*Timed, hit next button.

Saturday arrives, you decided to pick up some snacks on your way. When you arrive, you see your casual/close plugging in their new Bluetooth speakers, and syncing them with their laptop. They have a keyboard set up next to their laptop and a few books on tuning instruments and recording. As they're pulling up their latest tracks, they talk about how music is their passion, and how excited they are to finally have the right software to record and put it all together with. Your casual/close beams at you with pride and says, "Here goes nothing!"

\*Timed, hit next button.

You laugh because you see your casual/close watching you in nervous anticipation. You reassure them it's probably great and thank them for sharing it with you. As the first song begins to play, you hear an awful, high pitched noise mixed in with a loud bass, drowning out their vocals [**an awesome mix of vocals, music from the keyboard and a solid bass**]. After a few minutes they switch to another song to give you a good feel for their preferred genre of music. You continue listening while eating some of the snacks you brought but find it all to be really disappointing [**and to your delight find it even better than the last song**]. Your casual/close says to you, "I'm so excited to share this with you! What do you think??"

\*Timed, hit next button.

*Redefinition.* What do you tell your [partner]?