

Serious Lies

Bella M. DePaulo

*Department of Psychology
University of Virginia*

Matthew E. Ansfield

*Department of Psychology
Lawrence University*

Susan E. Kirkendol

*Department of Psychology
Pfeiffer College*

Joseph M. Boden

*Department of Philosophy
University of Canterbury*

In a pair of studies, college students and community members told autobiographical narratives about the most serious lie they ever told or the most serious lie that was ever told to them. Most serious lies were told by or to participants' closest relationship partners. Participants reported telling their serious lies to get what they wanted or to do what they felt they were entitled to do, to avoid punishment, to protect themselves from confrontation, to appear to be the type of person they wished they were, to protect others, and to hurt others. The degree to which the liars and targets felt distressed about the lies differed significantly across these 7 different types of lies. Systematic variations in the kinds of serious lies described by different subgroups of participants suggest that serious lies may be indicative of the life tasks that are most significant to those groups.

Diary studies of lying, conducted with both college students and adults from the community, have shown that lies are a fact of daily life (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996). Such studies suggest that people tell an average of at least one lie a day and describe their untruths as little lies of little consequence. They perceive their lies as not very serious, they rarely plan their lies, and they do not worry much about the possibility of getting caught. Although people experience a bit more distress during and after the telling of their lies than they do beforehand, their overall levels of discomfort are uniformly low. People describing their lies also

report little regret; if given the chance, most would opt to tell their lies again.

The motives people describe for their everyday lies are also rather benign. Although people are more likely to describe their lies as self-serving than altruistic, one out of every four of their lies were altruistic (told to benefit others). Even when people told their lies for self-serving reasons, they more often lied for psychological reasons (e.g., to protect themselves from embarrassment or to make themselves look or feel better) than for reasons of crass personal advantage (e.g., to get something they wanted).

The profile of liars and their lies that has emerged from the diary studies, as well as other studies of everyday lies (e.g., Camden, Motley, & Wilson, 1984; Lippard, 1988), is in stark contrast to our cultural stereotype of liars as cold and exploitative, and of lies as undermining of people's integrity and de-

Requests for reprints should be sent to Joseph M. Boden, University of Canterbury, Department of Philosophy, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch, New Zealand. E-mail: joseph.boden.1988@alum.bu.edu

structive of their personal relationships (Barnes, 1994; Bok, 1978; Nyberg, 1993). That lies are sometimes condemned by institutionalized religions and punishable by law also seems at odds with the innocuous profile.

The results of the diary studies also seem inconsistent with the literature on experiences that threaten and compromise personal relationships. Studies of events that increase uncertainty in close relationships (Planalp & Honeycutt, 1985) or cause conflicts and problems in adolescent friendships (Youniss & Smollar, 1985), as well as studies of important relationship transgressions (Metts, 1994), and of interpersonal betrayals (Hansson, Jones, & Fletcher, 1990; Jones & Burdette, 1993; Jones, Cohn, & Miller, 1991) all assign a prominent role to lying. Studies specifically addressing the emotional and interpersonal consequences of discovering deception have documented that emotions can be intense and close relationships can be tarnished or even terminated (Levine, McCornack, & Avery, 1992; McCornack & Levine, 1990; see also Anderson, Ansfield, & DePaulo, 1999; Metts, 1989). Yet the diary studies indicate that everyday lies are relatively infrequent in close relationships; instead, people tell more lies per social interaction to the people in their lives to whom they feel less close emotionally. When people do lie to their close relationship partners (compared to less close partners), they are relatively more likely to tell altruistic lies intended to benefit their partners than self-serving ones designed to benefit themselves (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998).

LITTLE LIES, BIG LIES

How can lies be both benign and devastating? Perhaps the studies suggesting dire consequences of lies selectively sampled only certain kinds of lies. The diary studies, in which participants recorded all of their lies for a week, may have included some of the consequential lies sampled in other studies, but at a very low rate. The key distinction, we think, is one of seriousness. The little lies of everyday life are overwhelmingly lies that are not very serious. No published study has yet focused specifically on serious lies. In the research reported here, we recruited college students and a more demographically diverse sample of people from the community to tell us specifically about the most serious lie they ever told (liar's perspective) or the most serious lie ever told to them (target's perspective). We expected the results of this research to differ dramatically from the results of the everyday lies studies. Specifically, we expected the content of the lies, the level of distress experienced by the liars, and the relationship between liar and target to be very different. Although we expected to find the same fundamental motivations for lying in these studies of serious lies as in the studies of everyday lies, we predicted that the relative frequencies of the various motivations would differ markedly.

We believe that serious lies are the ones that are perceived as threats, transgressions, and betrayals; that result specifi-

cally in relationship problems; that endanger people's reputations; and that are forbidden by organized religion and indictable by law. An important question posed by this description of serious lies is this: If serious lies entail such serious risks, then why do people tell them? Our premise is that, unlike lies of little consequence, serious lies are told because the truths that are covered by those lies are even more threatening than the risks involved in telling the lies (see also DePaulo & Kashy, 1998). We believe that the truths covered by serious lies pose threats to whatever is most important to people in their lives, such as their close personal relationships, their identities, and their livelihoods. The contents of serious lies (i.e., the truths covered by the lies) will thus include such categories as affairs, misdeeds, forbidden behaviors, acts of violence, and compromising personal facts. Categories of lies that were commonplace in the diary studies, such as feigned agreements and feelings that were presented as more positive than they were in fact, will be mostly absent from the reports of serious lies. So will lies in which people modestly understate their achievements or overstate their failings. In short, we expect the majority of serious lies to be told to hide bad behaviors. As Millar and Tesser (1988) noted, lies are told to meet the expectations of the targets of the lies. Therefore, when people behave in ways that they expect will disappoint or anger the target, they are likely to lie to cover those behaviors.

ORIGINS OF SERIOUS LIES

Our prediction is that the majority of serious lies originate in bad behaviors that the liars try to hide. However, not all serious lies will fit that characterization. We expect that altruistic lies told to protect others will rarely originate from bad behaviors. Instead, they are likely to begin with distressing information, such as news of the death or serious illness of a loved one, that the liar would like to hide from the target. Lies told to serve identity and self-presentational motives provide another example of lies that may not always originate with bad behaviors (or distressing information). Instead, these lies are sometimes told when the liars wish to claim a particular identity (e.g., published writer, sexually experienced sophisticate, high school hero) that they cannot claim truthfully.

MOTIVES

Psychic coins are the currency of everyday lies. People fabricate stories of weekend adventures to seem more exciting or desirable, or modestly understate their performance at work or at school to seem like one of the gang. They try to hide their embarrassment over a recent breakup by feigning nonchalance and they avoid the awkwardness of expressing a contrary opinion by falsely claiming to feel just the same way as everyone else. These everyday lies told for psychological reasons are much more frequent than the everyday lies told

for reasons of personal advantage, such as manipulating parents into sending small amounts of money and avoiding babysitting for unruly children.

In the realm of serious lies, we expect psychological motives to remain important, but to be surpassed in significance by motives to attain personal advantage. Tellers of serious lies are trying to turn big profits on shady business deals, to engage in extramarital affairs while maintaining their marriage, and to defy the commands of their parents or bosses without suffering the consequences. They lie instrumentally to get what they want or what they feel they are entitled to have or to do, and to avoid punishment for their bad behaviors. Less often, serious lies will be motivated by the more psychological reasons of protecting oneself from conflicts (e.g., about money or emotional commitments), claiming false identities (including living a lie), and deliberately hurting others.

In everyday life, people often try to spare other people's feelings by falsely complimenting them on their clothes, their job performances, and their artistic and culinary creations (DePaulo et al., 1996), or by hiding the true reasons for declining a date (Folkes, 1982). For lies protective of others to be regarded as serious, we think they need to cover more dire truths than burnt casseroles and garish sweaters. We expect people to tell protective lies primarily about matters of life and death, and we expect them to occur infrequently.

EMOTIONAL AND RELATIONAL OUTCOMES

Relative to everyday lies, we expect serious lies to be perceived more negatively, and to be accompanied by greater personal distress and more damaging interpersonal outcomes. However, the degree to which these negative outcomes ensue should vary systematically with the motives served by the lies. For example, although serious lies should generally be rated fairly low on justifiability, those lies told to protect others should be rated as more justifiable than other serious lies.

RELATIONSHIP CLOSENESS

The diary studies of everyday lies suggested that close personal relationships function as safe havens where the little lies of everyday life are infrequently told (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998). Of course this makes perfect sense considering that trust itself is the glue that bonds our relationships and keeps them stable. We expect the story for serious lies to be strikingly and in some ways ironically different. We predict that most serious lies will be told by and to people's closest relationship partners. We believe that serious lies are told when the truth would threaten something valuable to the liar, such as an important relationship. Close personal relationships are generally more valuable than casual ones, and therefore in greater need of protection. When the truth might threaten the existence of a valued relationship (as affairs do to romantic

relationships), or when the truth can seriously disrupt the quality and emotional tone of an important relationship (as, e.g., when children commit transgressions strictly forbidden by their parents), serious lies will be told. Close relationship partners are also lures for serious lies because they have the highest expectations, and greatest number of expectations, of the potential liars. People will therefore tell their most important lies (the lies that cover their most compromising behaviors) to the people who would be most surprised and disappointed by the truth (Millar & Tesser, 1988).

Several corollaries follow from this prediction. First, serious lies will be told disproportionately to the particular relationship partners who are most important to the potential liars. Parents, for example, may be more important in the lives of college students than of older adults, in that parents control more resources and privileges of their college-age children than of their older children, and college students may care more about what their parents think of them. Therefore, the college students should more often name parents as the targets and tellers of their most serious lies than will people from the community sample. Also, if there are categories of people for whom other life tasks are as important or more so than the development and maintenance of close personal relationships, then within those categories, serious lies may not be told disproportionately by and to close relationship partners. We predicted that the men in the community sample would be one such example (see also Jones et al., 1991). Their jobs and their roles as providers for their families may be especially important to them. Their most serious lies, then, may involve people who are not close to them but who are important to their job success and stability (e.g., bosses and coworkers) as often as people who are close relationship partners.

PERSPECTIVE DIFFERENCES

As is typical in the study of perspective differences in autobiographical narratives (Baumeister, Stillwell, & Wotman, 1990; Baumeister, Wotman, & Stillwell, 1993; Leary, Springer, Negel, Ansell, & Evans, 1998), the perpetrators (in this case, the liars) and the victims (targets) were not describing the same events. To the extent that the perpetrators and victims chose different kinds of stories to describe, their reports should also differ systematically (see Bok, 1978, for a discussion of perspective differences in lying).

In the previous perspective studies, participants had great leeway in selecting a relevant story; for instance, they could choose any story about anger or heartbreak or hurt feelings. In this research, we limited participants' choices by asking them to describe their most serious lie (rather than any serious lie). Even with this focusing factor, however, we expected participants telling stories about the lies that they told (liar perspective) to report very different lies, and to describe the lie episodes in different ways than the participants telling stories about lies that were told to them (target perspective).

The motivational differences for selecting different stories are obvious. For example, liars might choose to describe less reprehensible lies than would the targets, so that they do not appear so villainous. More interesting, though, may be the cognitive processes that might lead to the selection of different lie episodes. We think that when people try to think of a serious lie that they told to someone else, they will search for the type of experience in which they think they would be tempted to tell a lie. Stereotypically, that would be an experience in which they engaged in a behavior that the target would perceive as bad, and they were therefore likely to get into trouble if the behavior became known.

When participants are instead asked to tell about the most serious lie that was ever told to them, they cannot as easily search for the beginnings of the lie episode (e.g., the bad behavior) because they may have had no definitive knowledge of the bad behavior until they discovered the lie. Similarly, they would have no direct access to the liar's motivation for telling the lie. Targets' experiences of the lie episode begin after much of the liar's experience has transpired—that is, after the liar has done something bad and then lied about it. For the targets, then, the stories start with the suspicion or discovery of the lie. (Of course, liars sometimes get away with their lies, and so targets cannot describe the lies they never even suspected.) When targets search for a serious lie, they will focus on the fact of having been deceived in a serious way. Stereotypically, the episodes they will look for will be ones in which they felt hurt, angry, and betrayed. Liars may be less likely to look for lies by looking for times when targets reacted with hurt and anger because that would mean searching for the end of the lie episode rather than the beginning. Even if they did choose to search for serious lies by looking for negative target reactions, they still might report different lies than the targets because targets sometimes hide their discovery of the lie from the liars.

As a consequence of these different search procedures, liars should describe more lies told to cover bad behaviors than should targets. If the selection of lie episodes were determined primarily by self-presentational motives instead of search strategies, then liars might instead describe fewer stories in which the lie was told to hide a bad behavior.

Because of liars' focus on the threat of getting into trouble, their lies should be told disproportionately to high-status targets who have power over them. The targets' focus on being hurt and betrayed, in contrast, is more likely to lead them to a story in which the liar was about the same status as themselves.

METHOD

Participants

Study 1 participants were 66 college students who were asked to describe, in two sessions, the most serious lie they ever told (liar perspective) and the most serious lie ever told to them (target perspective). Two usable stories were ob-

tained from all but 4 of the participants. (The others were unable to return for a second session, or they told stories that were not really lies or were not audible on the tape.) In all, 26 men provided 25 liar stories and 26 target stories; 40 women provided 39 liar stories and 38 target stories, for a total of 128 stories.

Study 2 participants were 53 men and 54 women from the community, each of whom was asked to provide either a liar or a target story (randomly assigned). Liar stories were told by 29 men and 26 women, and target stories were told by 24 men and 28 women, for a total of 107 stories. The community members ranged in age from 19 to 84 ($M = 39$). Ninety percent of them were employed and 60% were married. Twenty-nine percent had no more than a high school education.

Procedure

In Study 1, college student participants volunteered to participate in partial fulfillment of a requirement for an introductory psychology course. They signed up for the study after reading a brief posted description indicating that they would be asked to describe serious lies. They were subsequently called, reminded of the task, informed that they would be audiotaped (if they gave permission), and scheduled for the first session. When they arrived, they were told that they would be left alone in a room to describe into a tape recorder the most serious lie they had ever told (if they were randomly assigned to tell the liar story first) or the most serious lie anyone ever told them. They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. They were encouraged to tell the story as if their most intimate friend were in the room listening and wanted to hear all of the details. Then they completed an extensive questionnaire (described later), and were scheduled to return to tell their other story. The procedure during the second session was identical, except that a debrief was added at the end.

In Study 2, names of potential participants for the community sample were selected randomly from the local telephone directory. Participants in this study were randomly assigned to describe either a liar story or a target story in writing on a questionnaire that was mailed to them.¹ Brief introductory letters describing the study were mailed to the potential participants. Subsequently, research assistants called them, described the study, and invited them to participate in exchange for payment of \$5 (about 35% of the individuals contacted agreed to participate in the study). Those who agreed were mailed a packet containing a consent form, an explanatory letter, a reimbursement check, and the questionnaire. The first page of the questionnaire included only the instructions to describe the lie; the rest of the page was left blank. The questionnaire was otherwise the same as the one answered by the college students.

¹In pilot testing, we found that we were more successful in recruiting participants from the community if we asked them to tell just one story and if they could answer at home by

questionnaire instead of coming into the lab. We think it is unlikely that these methodological differences account for any of the substantive differences we found in the serious lies described by college students versus community members, but of course that is an empirical question.

Questionnaires

Several sections of the questionnaire included sets of items pertaining to a single issue (e.g., targets' emotional reactions). These individual items were reduced to a smaller number of composite scales based on the correlational structure. We averaged items that, for both samples, were highly correlated with each other, but not with other items. Ratings of emotional reaction, consequences, justifiability of the lie, and seriousness of the lie were made on 9-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*).

The reactions that targets showed on discovering the lie were combined to form five composite variables: (a) cried and acted hurt, depressed, and tense; (b) acted defiant and angry; (c) acted loving and forgiving; (d) acted relieved and happy; and (e) feigned ignorance and indifference. The reactions that liars showed when their lies were discovered were combined into four composites: (a) cried and acted hurt and depressed; (b) apologized, acted guilty, and asked forgiveness; (c) joked and acted happy; and (d) acted relieved and indicated a desire to tell about the lie. Liars also indicated the degree of distress they experienced while telling their lie. This distress composite included participants' mean ratings of their guilt, sadness, happiness (reversed), inability to concentrate, and preoccupation with the lie. Liars also described changes in their attitudes about lying as a consequence of having told a serious lie; their reports of finding it more difficult to lie, intending to tell fewer lies in the future, and feeling worse about themselves after telling lies were combined into a single composite. Participants' descriptions of the interpersonal consequences of the lie (short term and long term, rated separately) were combined into three composites: (a) liar and target saw each other less often and became less close; (b) liar and target became more guarded toward each other; and (c) the target trusted the liar less.

On individual 9-point scales, participants rated the seriousness and the justifiability of the lies. They also indicated how long ago it was that the lie was told. Those telling liar stories indicated whether their lie had ever been discovered, and those telling target stories indicated whether they ever indicated to the liar that they had discovered the lie. On the final (free response) item of the questionnaire, participants were asked how many lies they told (or had been told) that were more serious than the one they described.

Participants also described characteristics of the person to whom they told their lie or who told the lie to them, including age (free response), gender, status (lower, equal, or higher), and relationship type (parent, child, romantic partner, other family member, friend, best friend, acquaintance, or

stranger). Community members also completed a demographic questionnaire, on which they indicated their educational background, marital status, and employment status. All questions apart from age were in forced-choice format.

Content Coding

Exact typed transcripts were made from the audiotaped stories from Study 1 and the handwritten stories from Study 2. The content of the lies, and the origins and motives for the lies were coded from the transcripts. Definitions and examples are shown in Table 1. Three people coded contents and motives, and three other people coded the origins. Two coders also rated the lies for justifiability and seriousness. Coders were trained undergraduate and graduate student research assistants (some were paid, and others were receiving course credit for acting as research assistants), and were blind to the hypotheses of the study. Reliabilities (kappas) were .94, .83, and .88, respectively for contents, motives, and origins. Reliabilities (alphas) for justifiability and seriousness were .81 and .87, respectively.

RESULTS

Overview

Each measure or set of measures was analyzed as the dependent variable in two analyses of variance (ANOVAs): a 2×2 (Sex of Storyteller \times Perspective: liar, target) ANOVA, and a one-way ANOVA with the seven motives as levels (entitlement, avoid punishment and blame, instrumental, identity, protect self, hurt other, and protect other). Furthermore, each of these ANOVAs was carried out separately for both the college and community samples (the results for the college and community samples are reported together for each dependent measure here, for purposes of comparison). The perspective variable served as a within-subjects variable for the college sample (thus all ANOVAs for the college sample are mixed-design) and a between-subject variable for the community sample. Chi-square tests were also computed when appropriate. Effects not described were not significant ($p > .05$). A correlation matrix for continuous variables may be found in Table 2.

Seriousness of the Lies

Students' mean rating of the seriousness of their lies on a 1 to 9 scale was 6.69 ($SD = 2.09$), and the community participants' mean rating of the seriousness of their lies was similarly high at 6.97 ($SD = 2.24$). (The mean seriousness rating in the studies of everyday lies was 3.21; DePaulo et al., 1996.) In both samples, a high percentage of the lies were rated as an 8 or 9 (47% of the lies described by the commu-

TABLE 1
Definitions and Examples of Motive, Content, and Origin Categories of Serious Lies

Motives	Content	Origin
<p>Entitlement: Liars feel that they are entitled to engage in particular behaviors that they believe to be forbidden or discouraged by the targets of their lies. <i>Example:</i> She told her parents she was spending the night at her girlfriend's house when she actually went on a date with a boy.</p>	<p>Affairs and other romantic cheating: Lies about infidelities such as affairs and dating and socializing with rival romantic partners. <i>Example:</i> Her boyfriend deceived her about spending time with a former girlfriend when she was out of town.</p>	<p>Bad behaviors: Lies told to cover behaviors that might elicit disapproval from others. Liars believe that others might consider the behaviors to be bad, but the liars do not necessarily share that opinion themselves. <i>Example:</i> She lied about shoplifting.</p>
<p>Avoid punishment or blame: Lies told to avoid punishment or blame. <i>Examples:</i> He lied about being involved in damaging a construction site. He lied to his father about how the car was damaged.</p>	<p>Misdeeds <i>Examples:</i> Her sister lied about taking money from her. He lied about giving out drugs on a field trip, and then lied on his college application about being suspended for it.</p>	<p>Distressing information: Lies told to cover facts, feelings, or information that might be distressing to the target. <i>Examples:</i> His mother told him that there was nothing wrong with his father when he actually had serious psychological problems His mother told him and his brothers that everything was fine when in fact she and their father were planning to divorce.</p>
<p>Instrumental: Lies told to attain material rewards or other personal pleasures or advantages. <i>Examples:</i> He misled a customer about a deal he was making on a car. Her husband, a clergyman and college dean, had a 15-year affair that he lied about continuously.</p>	<p>Personal facts or feelings: Lies about personal facts or feelings (differing from lies about identity in that the identity lies are about broader aspects of the liar's identity). <i>Examples:</i> Her friend, who was just released from the hospital, said there was nothing wrong when she had actually had a miscarriage. Her wedding vows were a lie; she never did love him.</p>	<p>Wishes: Lies told to create a desired impression or identity that liars wish they could claim truthfully. <i>Examples:</i> He told a series of lies about himself and the people he knew to impress a couple he admired. Her supervisor took credit for her idea for a successful sales promotion.</p>
<p>Identity and self-presentation: Lies told to create a false impression about the liar's identity or identity-relevant experiences. <i>Examples:</i> He fabricated a brilliant high school athletic career to his new college friends and girlfriend. More than 50 years ago, she told a man she was dating (and believed she would marry) that she had some of her writings published in a prestigious magazine.</p>	<p>Forbidden socializing: Lies told about social behaviors in which the liars are forbidden to engage. <i>Examples:</i> He got to go on a ski trip by telling his mother that he was going to a soccer game and then calling to say that the bus broke down on the way back. Parents were deceived by their daughter who said she was going babysitting when she was actually going to a school dance.</p>	
<p>Protect self: Lies told to protect the liar psychologically, usually from confrontation, embarrassment, or relationship conflict. <i>Examples:</i> Her boyfriend told her that the woman who came back from Florida with him "just needed a ride". His friend said he would lend him money for a second mortgage but never did.</p>	<p>Money, job <i>Examples:</i> He lied under oath about the practices of the company that employed him. Her husband used the money they saved for a downpayment on a house for a stock market investment, after promising he would not do so.</p>	
<p>Hurt other: Lies told to hurt the target deliberately, either with the lie or the behavior covered by the lie. <i>Examples:</i> She told her boyfriend that she wanted nothing to do with him when she really still cared for him. Her sister told her that her biological father was not the man who raised her.</p>	<p>Death, illness, injury <i>Examples:</i> His father told him that their dog had been hit by a van when instead he had taken it to the pound. She concealed her diagnosis of Parkinson's from her elderly mother, who was seriously ill herself.</p>	
<p>Protect other: Lies told to protect the target or another person from harm or from distressing information. <i>Examples:</i> His mother told him that his dying grandfather was only going into the hospital for tests. Everyone in his family knew that his mother had cancer but waited 3 weeks to tell him.</p>	<p>Identity: Lies about the liar's identity, or broad aspects of it. <i>Examples:</i> He made up past experiences with drinking and dating to impress a girlfriend. He lied about going to a bar for gays.</p>	

nity sample, and 39% by the college sample). Lies told from the target's perspective were rated as more serious than the lies told from the liar's perspective for both the student and community samples: student sample, 7.13 versus 6.25, $F(1, 60) = 6.14, p < .05, \eta^2 = .09, MSE = 4.26$; community sample, 7.52 versus 6.44, $F(1, 102) = 6.23, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06, MSE = 4.62$. Furthermore, analyses revealed a significant Sex \times Perspective interaction for the community sample, $F(1, 102) = 4.06, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$. Contrast analyses revealed that male liars ($M = 5.86$) thought their lies were less serious than female liars ($M = 7.12$), $F(1, 102) = 4.53, p < .05$; male targets ($M = 7.75$), $F(1, 102) = 10.19, p < .01$; or female targets ($M = 7.32$), $F(1, 102) = 6.082, p < .05$. This interaction was not significant for the college sample, $F(1, 60) = .06, p > .05, \eta^2 = .00$.

Community participants reported that they had told, or had been told, an average of 0.61 lies ($SD = 1.28$) that were more serious than the one they described for this study, whereas college participants reported that they had told, or been told, an average of 0.92 lies ($SD = 1.63$) that were more serious. For 69% of the stories in the community sample and 62% of the stories in the college sample, participants reported that no lie was more serious than the one they described.

When the Lies Were Told

The stories told by college students described lies that were told an average of 2.99 years ago, whereas the community members described lies that were told an average of 11.90 years ago (these could not, however, be compared statistically). For the community participants, analyses revealed a significant main effect for perspective, $F(1, 103) = 4.93, p = .03, \eta^2 = .05, MSE = 194.71$, whereas this effect was not significant for the college participants, $F(1, 124) = 0.67, p > .05, \eta^2 = .01, MSE = 8.82$. For the community members, lies described from the liar's perspective were told 14.76 years ago, whereas target lies were told 8.88 years ago. The corresponding means for the college students were 2.78 and 3.20. For the college participants, but not community participants, analyses revealed a marginal main effect for sex, $F(1, 124) = 3.76, p = .06, \eta^2 = .03, MSE = 10.41$. Male college students reported that the lies were told 3.67 years ago, whereas female college students reported that the lies were told 2.54 years ago.

We also determined the participants' age at the time of each story, and divided those ages into six categories: up to 13, 14 to 17, 18 to 21, 22 to 35, 36 to 49, and 50 and older. For the college students, only the first three categories were relevant. In 45% (58 of 128) of the stories described by the college students, the students were between 14 and 17 years old at the time of the lie. For the community members, the percentage of lies told at each age level was as follows: 11% under 14 years old, 10% ages 14 to 17, 18% ages 18 to 21, 41% ages 22 to 35, 13% ages 36 to 49, and 7% age 50 and older.

For the college sample only, lies that were differentially motivated occurred at different ages; for Motive \times Age Category, $\chi^2(12, N = 128) = 33.80, p < .001$. Lies told to protect another person (8 of 18; 44%) were most likely to occur when the college student participant was no older than 13. Lies to avoid punishment (11 of 25; 44% for both the under 13 and 14–17 age brackets) were more likely than other kinds of lies to have occurred when the college student participant was 17 or under. Instrumental lies (19 of 38; 50%) were most likely to occur in the 14-to-17-year-old group, as were identity lies (13 of 17; 77%). Entitlement lies occurred in the 14-to-17 age group (6 of 14; 43%) and the 18-to-21 age group (8 of 14; 57%) only. More so than other kinds of lies, lies told to protect the self occurred when the college students were between the ages of 18 and 21 (5 of 7; 71%).

Contents of the Lies

As we expected, the contents of the lies (the truths that were hidden by the lies) were generally quite serious. They included, for example, affairs (the most frequent category), death and serious illnesses, and violence and danger. Misdeeds were also commonplace, as were acts of socializing that were forbidden by others. Participants also described serious lies that were about money or jobs, personal facts and feelings, and their identities. (See Table 1 for definitions and examples, and the last column of Table 3 for the frequencies of each content category.)

Lies characterized by different motives were told to cover different contents in both the college and community samples: community sample Motive \times Content, $\chi^2(42, N = 107) = 147.38, p < .001$; college sample Motive \times Content, $\chi^2(42, N = 128) = 233.84, p < .001$. As shown in Table 3, entitlement lies were disproportionately told to cover forbidden socializing in the college sample; protect self lies were told to cover affairs in the community sample; lies told to avoid punishment often covered misdeeds in both samples; instrumental lies often covered affairs in both samples; identity lies often involved personal facts or feelings and the liar's identity in both samples; and lies told to protect others often covered news of deaths or serious illnesses in both samples.

The contents of the lies were different for men and women in the community sample, Sex \times Content, $\chi^2(7, N = 107) = 16.57, p < .05$. Community women (who contributed 51% of the community sample of 107 lies) described 67% of the lies told to cover forbidden socializing (4 of 6), 59% of the lies told to cover personal facts and feelings (10 of 17), 75% of the lies about violence and danger (3 of 4), 61% of the lies about affairs (14 of 23), and 71% of the lies about identity (5 of 7). Community men (who contributed 49% of the total community sample of lies) described 86% of the lies about money and jobs (19 of 22). This same effect was found to be only marginal for the college sample, $\chi^2(7, N = 128) = 13.55, p = .06$. College women (who contributed 60% of the college sample of 128 lies) described 79% of the lies told to cover

TABLE 2
Correlation Matrix for Continuous Variables

Variable	Closeness	Liking	Planning	Expect Success	Avoided Detection	Seriousness	Think About Lie Now	Number of Lies More Serious	Number of Years Ago	Target Sadness	Target Anger	Target Loving/ Forgiving	Target Relief	Target Indifferent
Closeness	—	.80**	-.09	-.07	-.06	.03	.12	-.06	.09	.11	-.15	.19	.04	.10
Liking	.91**	—	-.07	-.06	.04	-.08	-.03	.02	.14	.06	-.23*	.24*	.01	.15
Planning	.01	.06	—	.23**	.13	-.15	.02	.02	-.26**	-.01	.00	-.05	-.21*	-.03
Expect success	-.18	-.11	.03	—	.28*	.05	.04	.05	-.09	.09	.00	-.19	-.03	.03
Avoided detection	.03	.04	.10	.15	—	.25**	.06	-.16	.01	.10	.03	.06	-.02	.01
Seriousness	.00	-.05	.27**	.03	.02	—	.27**	-.40**	.18*	-.04	-.01	.01	.05	.13
Think about lie now	.00	-.10	.01	.10	.04	.26**	—	-.20*	-.04	.22*	.08	-.10	.04	-.12
Number of lies more serious	.01	.03	.17	-.05	.00	-.07	.10	—	-.13	-.01	-.10	.10	.26*	.06
Number of years ago	-.07	.01	.27**	-.08	-.12	-.12	-.17	-.18	—	.00	-.06	.10	-.02	.11
Target sadness	.11	.04	.01	-.10	-.15	.35**	.19	-.06	-.05	—	.32**	-.17	-.03	-.23*
Target anger	-.10	-.10	.15	-.09	.10	.12	.14	.14	-.23*	.58**	—	.38**	.11	-.22*
Target loving/forgiving	.28*	.34**	.06	-.03	.11	-.03	-.17	.13	-.05	.00	-.08	—	.24*	.29*
Target relief	.11	.10	.06	-.17	-.17	.02	-.20	.02	-.05	-.15	-.14	.26*	—	.20*
Target indifferent	-.07	.02	.09	-.04	-.15	.04	-.08	.11	.12	-.06	.04	.09	.13	—
Liar sadness	.01	.03	.04	-.11	.24	.15	.11	-.13	.03	.36**	.31	.08	-.16	-.29*
Liar guilt	.41**	.38**	-.07	-.28	.08	.13	.06	-.03	-.11	.24	.09	.41**	.02	-.17
Liar happiness	-.08	.06	-.02	-.05	-.18	-.11	-.15	.00	.04	.00	.11	.00	.10	.44**
Liar relief	.06	.12	.07	.03	.12	.15	.12	-.17	-.15	-.01	-.07	.29*	.24	.25
Distress while telling lie	.18	.12	-.13	-.31**	-.08	.26**	.24*	.07	-.05	.42**	.34**	.12	.14	.02
Trust violation	-.10	-.11	-.07	-.07	.01	.13	-.05	-.02	.11	.10	.08	.14	-.04	-.10
Hurtfulness of behavior	-.14	-.12	-.14	-.07	-.13	-.07	-.05	.00	.03	.04	.17	.05	-.10	.02
Target age	-.04	-.09	.10	-.01	.09	.14	.09	-.19	.15	-.09	-.03	.01	.11	.04
Target attractiveness	.48**	.48**	.20	-.04	-.09	.08	-.07	.12	.03	.22	.03	.22	.10	-.01
Number of cohorts involved	.19	.08	.34**	.05	-.04	-.02	.08	.08	-.05	-.05	-.05	.22*	.02	.19
How vivid a memory	-.05	-.02	-.08	.06	.02	.07	.43**	-.00	.13	.13	.08	.06	-.16	-.10
Justifiability of lie	.06	.30**	.05	.06	.08	-.02	-.08	-.12	.02	.02	-.02	.15	.08	-.13
Attitude toward lying now	-.07	.13	-.10	-.08	.32**	.08	-.16	-.01	.01	.10	.18	.17	.03	-.06
Justifiability — raters	-.10	.05	-.14	-.06	.08	-.07	-.07	.06	-.11	.01	.16	-.05	-.01	-.03
Seriousness — raters	-.05	-.14	.13	.09	-.03	.14	-.11	-.12	-.03	-.09	-.08	-.07	-.05	-.08

Note. Correlations below the diagonal correspond to the community sample, correlations above diagonal to the college sample.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

TABLE 2
(Continued)

Variable	Liar Sadness	Liar Guilt	Liar Happiness	Liar Relief	Distress While Telling Lie	Trust Violation	Hurtfulness of Behavior	Target Age	Target Attractiveness	Number of Cohorts Involved	How Vivid a Memory	Justifiability of Lie	Attitude Toward Lying Now	Justifiability —Raters	Seriousness —Raters
Closeness	.02	.05	.12	.26*	.05	.19*	-.23*	-.07	.45**	-.10	.12	.09	-.05	.08	-.04
Liking	.05	.16	.16	.25*	.04	-.13	-.15	-.00	.32**	-.11	.12	.11	.21*	.05	-.03
Planning	-.01	.01	.08	-.04	-.17	.00	-.04	.05	-.09	.00	.11	.08	-.11	.02	.14
Expect success	-.15	-.10	.18	-.27*	-.22*	.06	.07	-.06	-.01	.04	-.04	.12	-.08	-.15	-.11
Avoided detection	.23*	.07	-.22*	-.09	.06	.02	.04	.12	-.07	-.10	.21*	.08	.18*	.02	.20*
Seriousness	.06	.08	-.19	.06	.16	-.01	-.06	.05	-.03	.05	.15	-.04	-.13	-.12	-.02
Think about lie now	.03	.04	-.22*	.06	.19*	-.02	-.01	-.13	.20*	-.11	.26**	.01	.01	-.08	.09
Number of lies more serious	-.09	.12	.28*	.13	-.06	-.06	-.07	-.01	.06	.01	-.09	.03	.03	-.03	-.15
Number of years ago	.03	.02	.08	.08	.10	-.03	-.04	.21*	-.08	-.03	-.12	-.09	.04	.01	.01
Target sadness	.35**	.21	-.13	-.10	.03	.15	.14	-.05	.08	-.06	.16	-.01	-.23**	-.11	.17
Target anger	.15	-.11	-.13	-.20	-.17	.00	-.03	-.13	-.05	.02	.00	-.08	-.30**	-.07	.11
Target loving/forgiving	-.17	-.02	.22	.27*	-.02	-.15	-.09	.09	-.03	.09	.03	.17	-.04	.06	-.01
Target relief	-.07	-.22*	.25*	.07	.05	-.14	-.04	-.06	-.13	.16	-.13	.10	-.09	-.13	.03
Target indifferent	-.22*	-.11	.25*	.12	.06	-.02	-.03	.13	.00	.03	-.08	.12	-.02	.13	-.07
Liar sadness	—	-.45**	-.27*	.15	.23*	.04	.03	-.14	.08	-.00	.05	-.05	.03	.08	.23*
Liar guilt	.40**	—	-.10	.43**	.07	.04	.08	-.18	.39**	-.05	-.05	-.21	.04	-.00	.16
Liar happiness	-.26*	-.19	—	.27*	-.02	-.20	-.16	-.01	.08	.06	-.05	.16	.00	.04	-.06
Liar relief	.13	.32*	.03	—	.01	.14	.13	-.01	.32**	-.02	.12	.16	-.01	.01	-.07
Distress while telling lie	.46**	.34**	-.04	.14	—	.03	.07	-.03	.01	-.16	.02	-.14	.26**	.07	.17
Trust violation	-.12	-.01	-.11	-.29*	.07	—	.83**	-.09	-.03	-.14	.08	-.10	-.19*	-.14	-.11
Hurtfulness of behavior	-.20	-.18	.21	-.28*	.11	.63**	—	-.18*	-.01	-.19*	.03	-.13	-.22*	-.12	-.18
Target age	-.00	.09	.11	.06	-.08	.12	.12	—	-.34**	.03	.05	.28**	.26**	.04	.18*
Target attractiveness	-.03	.28*	.08	.16	.05	-.12	-.09	-.14	—	-.16	.12	-.16	-.05	-.09	-.05
Number of cohorts involved	-.09	-.03	.06	.11	-.18	-.19*	-.23*	.19	.15	—	-.12	.09	-.09	-.10	-.00
How vivid a memory	.25	.04	-.10	.02	.15	-.02	-.02	-.05	-.01	.06	—	.17	-.08	.07	-.08
Justifiability of lie	.18	.10	.09	.12	-.08	-.11	-.13	.06	.15	.06	.05	—	.24**	.08	.11
Attitude toward lying now	.37**	.36**	.02	.18	.15	-.12	-.12	-.07	.23*	-.14	-.01	.07	—	.14	.24**
Justifiability — raters	.12	.28*	-.13	.19	-.08	-.28**	-.08	-.10	.02	-.14	.02	-.03	.12	—	.17
Seriousness — raters	-.02	-.06	-.03	.02	-.07	.11	-.07	-.05	.07	-.08	-.11	-.00	.08	.09	—

Note. Correlations below the diagonal correspond to the community sample, correlations above diagonal to the college sample.

* $p < .05$ (two-tailed). ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).

TABLE 3
Content of Serious Lies as a Function of Motive

Motive	Entitlement	Avoid	Instrumental	Identity	Protect Self	Hurt Other	Protect Other	Total
		Punishment, Blame						
Community sample								
Affairs	33 (3)	6 (1)	31 (11)	0 (0)	32 (7)	17 (1)	0 (0)	22 (23)
Misdeeds	11 (1)	88 (14)	11 (4)	0 (0)	18 (4)	17 (1)	0 (0)	23 (25)
Personal facts, feelings	11 (1)	0 (0)	17 (6)	33 (4)	18 (4)	17 (1)	17 (1)	16 (17)
Forbidden socializing	33 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	9 (2)	0 (0)	17 (1)	6 (6)
Money, job	11 (1)	0 (0)	33 (12)	25 (3)	23 (5)	17 (1)	0 (0)	21 (22)
Death, illness	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	50 (3)	3 (3)
Identity	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (2)	33 (4)	0 (0)	17 (1)	0 (0)	4 (4)
Violence, danger	0 (0)	6 (1)	3 (1)	8 (1)	0 (0)	17 (1)	0 (0)	4 (4)
Total	(9)	(16)	(36)	(12)	(22)	(6)	(6)	(107)
College sample								
Affairs	7 (1)	3 (1)	53 (20)	12 (2)	29 (2)	50 (2)	11 (2)	23 (30)
Misdeeds	0 (0)	77 (23)	5 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	20 (25)
Personal facts, feelings	7 (1)	0 (0)	18 (7)	47 (8)	29 (2)	50 (2)	39 (7)	21 (27)
Forbidden socializing	86 (12)	7 (2)	8 (3)	0 (0)	29 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (19)
Money, job	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (1)	6 (1)	14 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (3)
Death, illness	0 (0)	7 (2)	5 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	44 (8)	9 (12)
Identity	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	30 (5)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (5)
Violence, danger	0 (0)	7 (2)	8 (3)	6 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	6 (1)	6 (7)
Total	(14)	(30)	(38)	(17)	(7)	(4)	(18)	(128)

Note. Entries are percentages computed within columns. *N*s are in parentheses.

forbidden socializing (15 of 19), 78% of the lies told to cover personal facts and feelings (21 of 27), and 67% of the lies about money and jobs (2 of 3). College men (who contributed 40% of the total college sample of lies) described 67% of the lies about death and illness (8 of 12), 56% of the lies about misdeeds (14 of 25), and 60% of lies about identity (3 of 5).

Finally, participants describing their own lies (liar perspective) mentioned different proportions of content categories than participants describing lies that had been told to them (target perspective) in both samples: community sample, Perspective \times Content, $\chi^2(7, N = 107) = 22.33, p < .01$; college sample, $\chi^2(7, N = 128) = 54.01, p < .001$. Liars led the way in a number of content categories. Of the lies about misdeeds, 84% (21 of 25) were described by liars in the community sample and 96% (24 out of 25) were described by liars in the college sample. Eighty-three percent of the lies about forbidden socializing (5 of 6) were described by liars in the community sample, whereas 84% of the lies about forbidden socializing (16 of 19) were described by liars in the college sample. Eighty percent of the lies about identity in the college sample were described by liars (4 of 5). In a number of other content categories, targets led the way. Targets in the community sample described 67% of the lies about death and serious illness (2 of 3), whereas targets in the college sample described 92% of the lies about death and serious illness (11 of 12). Seventy-seven percent of the lies about money and jobs (17 of 22) in the community sample were described by targets, whereas 100% of the lies about money and jobs (3 of 3) in the college sample were described by targets. Sixty-one

percent of the lies about affairs (14 of 23) in the community sample were described by targets, whereas 73% of the lies about affairs (22 of 30) in the college sample were described by targets. College targets described 71% of the lies about violence and danger (5 of 7; these were split evenly in the community sample), and 67% of the lies about personal facts and feelings (18 of 27; again, these were nearly evenly split for the community sample).

Origins of the Lies

In the diary studies of everyday lies (DePaulo et al., 1996), the origins of the lies were not coded. Therefore, we randomly selected 140 everyday lies from the college student and community samples for analysis. Two judges independently coded the lies (coders were trained as mentioned previously). Reliability (Cohen's kappa) ranged from .85 to .93. Eleven percent of the everyday lies were told to cover a bad behavior, 39% were told to hide distressing information, 6% were wishful lies, and 44% did not fit into any of those categories.

We predicted that in the realm of serious lies, most would be told to cover a behavior that others might view as bad. In fact, 75% of the serious lies in the community sample (80 of 107) and 69% of the serious lies in the student sample (88 of 128) were told to cover bad behaviors. We also expected a much smaller percentage of serious lies to be told to cover distressing information, such as news of a serious illness or death. Our prediction was confirmed with only 8.4% of the

lies in the community sample (9) and 14.8% in the college sample (19) fitting that description. Another 16 lies (15%) in the community sample and 15 lies (11.7%) in the college sample were wishful lies. (See definitions and examples in Table 1.) The other 2 lies (1.9%) in the community sample and 6 lies (4.7%) in the college sample did not fit into any of those categories and are not included in subsequent analyses of the origins variable.

The origins of the lies in bad behaviors, distressing information, or wishes corresponded to different motives for both the community sample—Origins \times Motives, $\chi^2(12, N = 105) = 59.44, p < .001$ —and the college sample— $\chi^2(12, N = 122) = 90.37, p < .001$. As shown in Table 4, all of the entitlement lies and all but 1 of the 45 lies told to avoid punishment were lies that covered a bad behavior for both samples. Lies told to protect others, in contrast, usually covered distressing information. Identity lies involved the fabrication of life facts and stories that participants only wished they could claim truthfully; unsurprisingly, then, many of the lies that originated in wishes were told in the service of identity-relevant motives.

The origins of the lies differed by perspective for the college sample, $\chi^2(2, N = 122) = 7.06, p < .05$, but not for the community sample, $\chi^2(2, N = 105) = 3.08, p > .05$. Of the lies covering bad behaviors in the college sample, 58% of them (51 of 88) were described from the liar’s perspective. Of the lies covering distressing information in the college sample, 74% (14 of 19) were described by targets. Similarly, 60% of the wishful lies (9 of 15) reported in the college sample were described by targets.

TABLE 4
Origins of Serious Lies as a Function of Motive

Motive	Origin		
	Bad Behavior	Distress	Wishes
Community sample			
Entitlement	100 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Avoid punishment	100 (16)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Instrumental	75 (27)	3 (1)	22 (8)
Identity	59 (7)	9 (1)	33 (4)
Protect self	77 (17)	5 (1)	9 (2)
Hurt other	50 (3)	17 (1)	33 (2)
Protect other	17 (1)	84 (5)	0 (0)
Overall	75 (80)	9 (9)	15 (16)
College sample			
Entitlement	100 (14)	0 (0)	0 (0)
Avoid punishment	97 (28)	3 (1)	0 (0)
Instrumental	74 (28)	5 (2)	18 (7)
Identity	53 (9)	12 (2)	35 (6)
Protect self	71 (5)	14 (1)	0 (0)
Hurt other	50 (2)	0 (0)	50 (2)
Protect other	11 (2)	72 (13)	0 (0)
Overall	69 (88)	15 (19)	12 (15)

Note. Entries are percentages computed within rows. Ns are in parentheses.

Motives for the Serious Lies

In the diary studies of everyday lies (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998; DePaulo et al., 1996; Kashy & DePaulo, 1996), 25% of the lies were other-oriented (e.g., told to protect others) and 51% were self-serving. Self-serving lies included lies told for psychological reasons (32% of all lies), which far outnumbered the self-serving lies told for reasons of personal advantage (19% of all lies). The other lies were neither self-serving nor other-oriented; they were told, for example, to create an effect (e.g., to entertain), to conform to conventions, or to simplify a response. We predicted that the serious lies, relative to the everyday lies from the diary studies, would include an even greater proportion of self-serving lies than other-oriented ones. As shown in the last column of Table 5, this did occur for both samples: In the community sample, 94.4% of the lies were self-serving and 5.6% were other-oriented, and in the college sample 85.9% of the lies were self-serving and 14.1% of the lies were other-oriented. Also as predicted, the relative proportions of lies told for psychological reasons as compared to reasons of personal advantage were the opposite of what was found in the everyday lies studies: For the community sample, 57% of all serious lies were told for reasons of personal advantage, compared to 37.4% that were told for psychological reasons (for the college sample, 64.1% of the lies were told for reasons of personal advantage and 21.9% of lies were told for psychological reasons). In the everyday lies studies, fewer than 2% of the lies were told primarily to hurt the target (and they were not analyzed in those studies); of the serious lies in our research, 5.6% were told to hurt the target in the community sample (6 of 107) and 3.1% in the college sample (4 of 128).

Table 4 (last column) also shows the percentages of each of the seven specific motives. The motives did not occur equally often in both the community and college samples; community sample, $\chi^2(6, N = 107) = 45.62, p < .001$; college sample, $\chi^2(6, N = 128) = 47.98, p < .001$. Lies told for instrumental reasons were the most common (33.6% in the community sample, 29.7% in the college sample). In the college sample, the second most common were lies told to avoid punishment or blame (23.4%), whereas in the community sample the second most common were lies told to protect the self (20.6%).

Lies described from the liar’s perspective were differentially motivated than lies described from the target’s perspective for both the community and college samples; for the community sample Perspective \times Motive, $\chi^2(6, N = 107) = 13.40, p < .05$; for the college sample, $\chi^2(6, N = 128) = 43.23, p < .001$. The percentages of lies that were described from the liar’s perspective were 77.8% for entitlement (7 of 9) in the community sample and 100% (14 of 14) in the college sample, 81.3% for avoid punishment (13 of 16) in the community sample and 83.3% (25 of 30) in the college sample, 36.1% for instrumental (13 of 36) in the community sample and 26.3% (10 of 38) in the college sample, 41.7% for identity (5 of 12)



TABLE 5
Motives for Serious Lies

Motive	College Sample		Community Sample		Overall
	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Self-serving	84 (43)	87 (67)	92 (49)	96 (52)	90 (211)
Personal advantage	67 (34)	62 (48)	58 (31)	56 (30)	61 (143)
Entitlement	2 (1)	17 (13)	4 (2)	13 (7)	10 (23)
Avoid punishment	33 (17)	17 (13)	15 (8)	15 (8)	20 (46)
Instrumental	31 (16)	28 (22)	40 (21)	28 (15)	31 (74)
Psychological	18 (9)	25 (19)	24 (18)	41 (22)	29 (68)
Identity	12 (6)	14 (11)	8 (4)	15 (8)	12 (29)
Protect self	4 (2)	6 (5)	24 (13)	17 (9)	12 (29)
Hurt other	2 (1)	4 (3)	2 (1)	9 (5)	4 (10)
Other-oriented					
Protect other	16 (8)	13 (10)	8 (4)	4 (2)	10 (24)
Total	(51)	(77)	(53)	(54)	(235)

Note. Entries are percentages computed within levels of headings for each column. *N*s are in parentheses.

in the community sample and 41.2% (7 of 17) in the college sample, 50.0% for protect self (11 of 22) in the community sample and 28.6% (2 of 7) in the college sample, 33.3% for hurt other (2 of 6) in the community sample and 50.0% (2 of 4) in the college sample, and 66.7% for protect other (4 of 6) in the community sample and 22.2% (4 of 18) in the college sample.

Targets' Reactions

The five composite target reactions were the five levels of a repeated measures factor in a 7×5 (Motive \times Target Reactions) ANOVA computed separately for each sample. Only data from the targets were included. For both samples, the main effect of target reactions was significant: college sample, $F(4, 232) = 14.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .20$, $MSE = 3.94$; community sample, $F(4, 172) = 10.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$, $MSE = 4.06$. Targets from both samples reacted most strongly with defiance and anger (college $M = 5.29$; community $M = 4.98$), and also with sadness (crying and expressions of tension, depression, and hurt feelings; college $M = 4.91$, community $M = 4.92$). Those two sets of reactions did not differ in strength—college sample contrast, $F(1, 232) = 0.68$, $p > .05$; community sample contrast, $F(1, 172) = 0.25$, $p > .05$ —but were significantly stronger than reactions involving expressions of indifference or feigned ignorance, college $M = 2.41$, contrast $F(1, 232) = 39.91$, $p < .05$; community $M = 3.02$, contrast $F(1, 172) = 20.74$, $p < .05$; loving and forgiving reactions, college $M = 2.47$, contrast $F(1, 232) = 37.70$, $p < .05$; community $M = 2.07$, contrast $F(1, 172) = 34.75$, $p < .05$; and expressions of relief or happiness, college $M = 1.84$, contrast $F(1, 232) = 68.17$, $p < .05$; community $M = 1.72$, contrast $F(1, 172) = 68.32$, $p < .05$. Expressions of relief and happiness were significantly weaker than the expressions of indifference and feigned ignorance: college sample contrast $F(1, 232) = 4.48$, $p < .05$; community sample contrast $F(1, 172) = 5.62$, $p < .05$.

Although the Motive \times Reactions interaction was also significant for both samples—college sample, $F(20, 232) = 1.86$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .14$; community sample, $F(24, 172) = 2.30$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$ —each sample revealed different patterns of means. For the college sample, one-way ANOVAs on the five composite target reactions were marginally significant only for defiance and anger, $F(5, 63) = 2.32$, $p = .055$, and sadness, $F(5, 63) = 2.33$, $p = .054$. For the community sample, one-way ANOVAs were significant only for loving and forgiving reactions, $F(6, 49) = 2.85$, $p < .05$, and moderately so for defiance and anger, $F(6, 49) = 2.01$, $p = .085$.

As shown in Table 6, for those in the college sample, targets of instrumental lies and of lies told by the liars to protect themselves reacted with much defiance and anger; targets of lies told to avoid punishment showed little anger. Targets from the college sample were especially likely to react with sadness on learning about the lies that were told to protect them (perhaps in part because they were also learning the distressing news that had been concealed), and targets of identity lies and lies told to hurt them were least likely to express sadness.

For those in the community sample, targets of instrumental lies, entitlement lies, and lies told to liars to protect themselves reacted with the greatest level of defiance and anger. Similar to the college sample, lies told to avoid punishment and blame were met with the least anger. With the exception of lies told to protect the targets themselves, targets reacted with relatively low levels of loving and forgiving reactions.

Liars' Reactions

Analyses of liars' reactions to the discovery of their lies included data only from the liars' perspective and only for the lies that were discovered. The four composite liar reactions were levels of a repeated measures factor in a 7×4 (Motive \times Liar Reactions) ANOVA computed for each sample. For both samples, only the main effect of liar reactions was significant: college sample, $F(3, 75) = 5.32$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .18$, MSE

TABLE 6
Target and Liar Experiences and Evaluations of the Serious Lies as a Function of Motive

Motive	Entitlement	Avoid Punishment, Blame	Instrumental	Identity	Protect Self	Hurt Other	Protect Other
Community sample							
Target reactions (target only)							
Defiant, angry	5.50	2.00 ^a	5.56 ^{ab}	2.56 ^b	4.75	6.00	4.50
Hurt, cry, depressed, tease	4.62	2.61	4.77	2.93	4.69	6.67	4.78
Liar experiences (liar only)							
Planning of the lie	5.33	2.50 ^a	5.75 ^a	4.17 ^b	5.09	3.50 ^b	7.00 ^a
Distress during lie	4.53	5.56	4.68	5.02	5.50	6.63	3.52
Evaluations of the lie (all participants)							
Justifiability	5.22	3.00	2.71 ^a	3.75	4.55	4.22	6.67 ^a
Negative consequences	5.58	6.04	6.59	6.43	6.01	6.31	4.96
College sample							
Target reactions (target only)							
Defiant, angry	2.89 ^a	4.10 ^b	6.35 ^{ab}	4.08	6.25	3.50	4.60
Hurt, cry, depressed, tease	4.15	3.97	5.27	3.55 ^a	3.83	3.89	5.80 ^a
Liar experiences (liar only)							
Planning of the lie	6.21	4.53	5.37	4.41	3.86	3.75	4.50
Distress during lie	5.81	6.07	5.05	4.85	5.83	5.60	4.75
Evaluations of the lie (all participants)							
Justifiability	5.64	5.47 ^a	3.45 ^{ab}	3.82	4.00	6.00	6.39 ^b
Negative consequences	5.68	5.53	6.63	5.71	5.54	6.67	5.80

Note. Entries are mean ratings on 9-point scales. Cells with superscripts in common (within a row) are significantly different at $p < .05$. For “negative consequences,” means are collapsed across the three kinds of consequences and short-term and long-term effects.

= 4.44; community sample, $F(3, 66) = 6.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .22$, $MSE = 6.28$. Liars' expressions of guilt (apologized, acted guilty, asked for forgiveness; college $M = 5.58$; community $M = 5.43$), were significantly stronger than any of their other emotional reactions such as relief (relieved, wanted to tell), college $M = 4.08$, contrast $F(1, 75) = 28.60$, $p < .05$; community $M = 4.21$, contrast $F(1, 66) = 35.66$, $p < .05$; sadness (cried, acted hurt and depressed), college $M = 3.73$, contrast $F(1, 75) = 33.34$, $p < .05$; community $M = 3.95$, contrast $F(1, 66) = 6.78$, $p < .05$; and (in the college sample only) happiness (joked, acted happy), college $M = 2.33$, contrast $F(1, 75) = 119.68$, $p < .05$; community $M = 1.93$, contrast $F(1, 66) = 0.59$, $p > .05$.

Analyses of liars' feelings of distress while perpetrating their lies, and their attitudes about lying afterward, included all data from the liars' perspective, regardless of whether the lies were ever discovered. The mean level of distress during the telling of the lies, across all lies, was similarly high for both samples ($M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.94$ for the college sample; $M = 5.05$, $SD = 2.16$ for the community sample). In the diary studies of everyday lies (DePaulo et al., 1996), the comparable value was 4.40 ($SD = 1.71$). Separate 2×7 (Sex \times Motive) ANOVAs revealed only a significant main effect for sex for the community sample, $F(1, 55) = 4.69$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$, $MSE = 4.27$. Women within the community reported feeling more distressed during the telling of their lies ($M = 5.76$) than did men ($M = 4.56$).

The mean of liars' reports of the degree to which they planned their lies, across all lies, was also similar in both

samples: $M = 4.88$ ($SD = 2.73$) for the college sample and $M = 4.86$ ($SD = 2.97$) for the community sample. In the studies of everyday lies (DePaulo et al., 1996), the mean was 2.95 ($SD = 1.29$). The planning of the serious lies differed significantly by motive, but only for those in the community sample, $F(6, 54) = 3.12$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .18$, $MSE = 7.80$. Liars from the community sample reported planning their lies especially carefully when telling lies told to protect others ($M = 6.00$ for protect others, $M = 4.71$ for entitlement, $M = 2.08$ for avoid punishment or blame, $M = 4.77$ for instrumental, $M = 2.00$ for identity or self-presentation, $M = 5.73$ for protect self, $M = 2.00$ for hurt others).

Appraisals of the Lies and Their Interpersonal Consequences

A one-way ANOVA with the seven motives as levels on participants' ratings of the justifiability of the lies was significant for both the community and college samples: community sample, $F(6, 98) = 2.71$, $p < .05$, $MSE = 8.13$; college sample, $F(6, 121) = 4.51$, $p < .001$, $MSE = 6.07$. As shown in Table 6, the lies told to protect others and the entitlement lies were rated as especially justifiable, whereas the instrumental lies were rated as the least justifiable. It should also be noted that, curiously, the hurt other lies were rated as being justifiable by the college sample, but this mean might be considered unreliable due to the fact that there were only four observations. A 2×2 (Sex \times Perspective) ANOVA on each sample yielded significant main effects for perspective: community

sample, $F(1, 101) = 30.19, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23, MSE = 6.95$; college sample, $F(1, 60) = 14.49, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20, MSE = 5.97$. The targets rated the lies as less justifiable than did the liars for both samples (community Ms = 2.30 and 5.14, college Ms = 3.95 and 5.65, respectively).

Participants rated their perceptions of the consequences of the lies both in the short term and in the long term. The three consequences (saw each other less and became less close; more guarded toward each other; and target trusted the liar less) were levels of a repeated measures factor, as were the two time frames (short term and long term) in a $7 \times 3 \times 2$ (Motive \times Consequences \times Time Frame) ANOVA for each sample. For both the community and college samples there was a significant main effect for type of consequence: community sample, $F(2, 102) = 13.01, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20, MSE = 13.83$; college sample, $F(2, 138) = 10.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14, MSE = 3.28$. Both samples indicated that there was a greater change in both closeness and guardedness (community sample Ms = 6.04 and 6.56, respectively; college sample Ms = 6.27 and 6.38, respectively) than in trust (community M = 5.38; college M = 5.16).

Further analysis revealed a number of interesting differences between the two samples on their appraisal of the consequences of their lies on the relationship. For example, the college sample, but not the community sample, revealed a main effect for time frame, $F(1, 69) = 9.62, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12, MSE = 2.49$. College participants rated the short-term effects on the relationship (M = 6.25) to be more severe than the long-term effects (M = 5.62). The analysis of the community sample revealed a significant interaction between type of consequence and motive, $F(12, 102) = 2.29, p < .05, \eta^2 = .21, MSE = 2.39$. For the instrumental lies, community participants indicated that they were less likely to experience a change in trust (M = 5.29) than a change in either closeness or guardedness (Ms = 7.22 and 7.27). For lies about protecting the self, community participants were again less likely to experience a change in trust (M = 5.07) than a change in either closeness (M = 6.14) or guardedness (M = 6.81). For lies about protecting another person, community participants were more likely to state that they were more guarded toward the other person (M = 6.13) than either being less close (M = 4.00) or losing trust (M = 4.75). For hurt other lies, community participants were more likely to state that they were less close to the other person (M = 7.06) than losing trust (M = 5.25). Finally, the analysis of the community sample also revealed a significant interaction between time frame and type of consequence, $F(2, 102) = 5.11, p < .01, \eta^2 = .09, MSE = 0.83$. Community participants were more likely to become less close (M = 6.20) and more guarded (M = 6.68) than less trusting in the short term, whereas in the long term participants were more likely to be more guarded (M = 6.44) than less trusting (M = 5.61), but closeness did not differ from either guardedness or trust.

For a further analysis, the three consequences (saw each other less and became less close; more guarded toward each

other; and target trusted the liar less) were levels of a repeated measures factor, as were the two time frames (short term and long term) in a $2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 2$ (Sex \times Perspective \times Consequences \times Time Frame) ANOVA for each sample (note that for the student sample, perspective was a within-subjects variable). For the community sample, the analysis revealed a significant main effect for perspective, $F(1, 54) = 7.46, p < .01, \eta^2 = .12, MSE = 11.90$. Community targets (M = 6.62) rated the consequences as being more severe than community liars (M = 5.59). The analysis also revealed a marginal Sex \times Perspective interaction, $F(1, 54) = 3.74, p = .06$. Male liars were marginally more likely to see their lies as having fewer consequences (M = 5.15) than female liars (M = 6.04), male targets (M = 6.90), or female targets (M = 6.33). For the college sample, analysis revealed a significant main effect for time frame, $F(1, 20) = 7.42, p < .05, \eta^2 = .27, MSE = 2.19$, and a significant main effect for consequences, $F(2, 40) = 14.32, p < .05, \eta^2 = .42, MSE = 3.05$. For the college sample, short-term consequences (M = 6.23) were significantly more severe than long-term consequences (M = 5.68), and two consequences (saw each other less and became less close; more guarded toward each other) were viewed as being significantly more severe (Ms = 6.26 and 6.48, respectively) than the reduction of trust between target and liar (M = 5.23).

Relationship Closeness

We predicted that serious lies would be told disproportionately by and to participants' closest relationship partners. To test this, we categorized the tellers and targets into three closeness categories: casual (strangers and acquaintances), intermediate (friends other than best friends, and family members other than parents, children, or spouse); and close (parents, romantic partners, best friends, and children). Analyses revealed a main effect for the three closeness categories, $\chi^2(2, N = 107) = 19.08, p < .001$ for the community sample, and $\chi^2(2, N = 128) = 89.64, p < .001$ for the college sample. Fifty-three percent of the lies in the community sample (56 of 107) were told by and to the closest partners; only 29% of the lies (31) were told to casual partners; and the rest (18.7%; 20 lies) were told to partners intermediate in closeness. Similarly, for the college sample, 72.7% of the lies (93 of 128) were told to the closest partners; only 16.4% (21) of the lies were told to casual partners; and the rest (10.9%; 14 lies) were told to partners intermediate in closeness.

In additional analyses, we used the seven more specific relationship subcategories as levels (strangers and acquaintances, friends, other family, parents, romantic, best friend, children). Both samples revealed a significant main effect for the seven relationship categories: community $\chi^2(6, N = 107) = 61.33, p < .001$; college $\chi^2(6, N = 128) = 89.68, p < .001$. By subcategory, in the community sample lies told by and to spouses and romantic partners (29%; 31 lies) and those told to strangers and acquaintances (29%; 31 lies) were most numerous, followed by lies told to and by parents (19.6%; 21 lies). For the college sam-

ple, lies told by and to parents were most numerous (42.2%; 54 lies), followed by romantic partners (26.6%; 34 lies), and strangers and acquaintances (16.4%; 21 lies).

We also suggested that personal relationships may be relatively less important to community men than to the other subsamples, and so for that subgroup, lies may not have been told disproportionately by and to close relationship partners. The means were as predicted. The percentages of lies told by or to casual, intermediate, and close relationship partners were 20%, 4%, and 76%, respectively, for college men; 14%, 16%, and 70% for college women; 17%, 11%, and 72% for community women; and 42%, 26%, and 32% for community men (it was of course possible to compare statistically only community men to community women, but looking at the percentages would suggest that community men differed from college men and college women as well). For significance testing, we computed a 2×3 (Sex \times Closeness) chi-square for each sample. For the community sample, the analysis revealed a significant Sex \times Closeness interaction, $\chi^2(2, N = 107) = 17.29, p < .001$. For the college sample, no interaction was found, $\chi^2(2, N = 128) = 4.52, p > .05$. Chi-square analyses computed separately for the four subgroups (across the three levels of closeness) were significant for the college men and women and community women: college men, $\chi^2(2, N = 128) = 44.59, p < .001$; college women, $\chi^2(2, N = 128) = 50.36, p < .001$; community women, $\chi^2(2, N = 107) = 37.00, p < .001$, but not for the community men, $\chi^2(2, N = 107) = 1.85, p > .05$.

To examine effects involving the specific relationship categories, we computed several other analyses. For the community sample only, a 2×7 (Sex \times Relationship) chi-square was significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 107) = 20.43, p < .01$. Of the 107 lies in the community sample, 49.5% were described by men and 50.5% by women. Men, however, described 71% of the lies involving strangers and acquaintances (22 of 31), 70% of the lies involving other family members (7 of 10), and 70% of the lies involving friends (7 of 10; there was one best friend lie in the community sample, told by a male participant). Women described all three of the lies involving children, 71% of the lies involving romantic partners (22 of 31), and 67% of the lies involving parents (14 of 21). For the college sample, a Sex \times Relationship chi-square was not significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 128) = 6.25, p > .05$.

For the college sample only, a 2×7 (Perspective \times Relationship) chi-square analysis was also significant, $\chi^2(5, N = 128) = 26.31, p < .001$; community sample, $\chi^2(6, N = 107) = 9.16, p > .05$. For the college sample overall, 50% of the stories were told from the liar's perspective and 50% from the target's perspective. However, the liar stories accounted for 86% of the stories involving strangers and acquaintances (18 of 21), and 60% of the stories involving parents (32 of 54). Stories told from the target perspective accounted for 60% of the other family stories (3 of 5), 78% of the stories involving friends (7 of 9), 71% of the romantic stories (24 of 34), and 100% of the best friend stories (5 of 5).

Lies involving different motives also involved different relationship partners for both the community and college samples. For the community sample, a 7×3 (Motive \times Closeness) chi-square was significant, $\chi^2(12, N = 107) = 25.01, p < .05$, as was a 7×7 (Motive \times Relationship) chi-square, $\chi^2(36, N = 107) = 73.30, p < .001$. Seventy-eight percent of all entitlement lies (7 of 9) were told by or to close relationship partners (usually parents). Instrumental lies were especially likely to involve strangers and acquaintances; 53% of them (19 of 36) involved these casual relationship partners, compared to a baseline of 33% of the 107 lies in the community sample. For the college sample, a 7×3 (Motive \times Closeness) chi-square was not significant, $\chi^2(12, N = 128) = 18.42, p > .05$, whereas a 7×7 (Motive \times Relationship) chi-square was significant, $\chi^2(30, N = 128) = 82.80, p < .001$. Parents were most often the target of entitlement lies (93%; 13 of 14) and lies about avoiding punishment and blame (53%; 16 of 30). Boyfriends and girlfriends were most often the target of instrumental lies (62%; 21 of 38), followed by acquaintances and strangers (33%; 7 of 38, compared to a baseline of 16.4% of the lies in the college sample). Parents were also disproportionately the target of lies intended to protect others (72%; 13 of 18).

Perspective Effects

We predicted that the lies described from the liar's perspective, many of which were told to get out of trouble, would be especially likely to have been told to higher status targets (who might have power over the liars). Conversely, lies described from the target's perspective (many of which were experienced as betrayals) would be especially likely to have been told by a person of equal status to the participant. For the community sample, the serious lies, regardless of perspective, were especially likely to involve people of equal status to the participant (64%; 60 of 94), and less likely to involve higher status (18%; 17 of 94) or lower status (18%; 17 of 94) people, $\chi^2(2, N = 107) = 39.34, p < .001$. For the college sample, the serious lies were told to either equal or higher status targets (47% and 43%, respectively; or 59 of 126 and 54 of 126) but not lower status targets (10%; 13 of 126), $\chi^2(2, N = 128) = 30.33, p < .001$. The college sample appears to differ from the community sample in this regard (although we could not test this difference); however, this may be due to differences in age.

For both samples, a 2×3 (Perspective \times Status) chi-square analysis was significant: community sample, $\chi^2(2, N = 107) = 8.24, p < .05$; college sample, $\chi^2(2, N = 128) = 13.60, p < .001$. This indicated that the effect varied with perspective in the predicted way. Of the lies described by the liars in the community sample, 28% (14 of 50) involved higher status others, whereas of the lies described by targets, 7% (3 of 44) involved higher status others. In contrast, a greater percentage of the targets' lies (25%; 11 of 44) than of the liars' lies (12%; 6 of 50) involved another person of lower status. Sixty

percent of the liars' lies (30 of 50) and 68% (30 of 44) of the targets' lies involved a person of equal status. In the college sample, 57% (36 of 63) of the liar lies were told to higher status targets, whereas 29% (18 of 63) of the target lies were told by higher status targets. Fifty-four percent (34 of 63) of the target lies were told by equal-status individuals (compared to 40% of the liar lies, or 25 of 63), and 18% (11 of 63) were told by lower status individuals (compared to 3%, or 2 of 63, of the liar lies).

We also suggested that liars and targets necessarily view the lie experiences differently because some lies are never discovered and some liars never learn for sure that they have been found out. For 26 of the 55 lies described from the liars' perspective in the community sample (47%), the liars reported that the lies were never discovered. For 40% (21 of 52) of the lies described from the targets' perspective, the targets indicated that they never accused the liar of the lie and that the liar remained unaware of their knowledge of the lie. In the college sample, 32 of 64 (50%) lies told from the liars' perspective were never discovered, whereas 14 of 64 (22%) lies told from the targets' perspective were never discovered.

DISCUSSION

Beyond the Ordinary

The lies that people describe as the most serious ones in their lives differ markedly from the little lies of everyday life. When people tell serious lies, they are more often hiding affairs than any other information. They also tell serious lies to conceal misdeeds such as cheating, stealing, smashing cars, socializing that was forbidden, and personal facts such as alcoholism and pregnancy. They also lie about money and jobs, death and illness, and their life stories. In sum, the truths covered by serious lies are often distressing, shameful, immoral, or illegal. They are truths that have the potential to mar or destroy relationships, reputations, and job security. Everyday lies, in contrast, are more often lies about feelings, preferences, opinions, ordinary achievements and failures (e.g., passing exams and gaining weight), routine actions, plans, and whereabouts. Serious lies are more carefully planned than are everyday lies, and the tellers of serious lies feel more distressed while perpetrating their lies than do the tellers of everyday lies. The targets of serious lies often react to the lies with anger, and the liars, when caught, often feel guilty and express remorse. The parties to serious lies report an erosion of trust and closeness in the aftermath of the lies. Everyday liars describe just a twinge of discomfort.

Motives for the Serious Lies

Self-Serving Lies Told for Personal Advantage

Why do people tell these serious lies, which often make them feel distressed and guilty, and which can sadden and an-

ger their targets, compromise their relationships, and threaten their jobs and reputations? The data on the origins of serious lies provides an important clue. Unlike everyday lies, serious lies most often originate with a behavior that the target of the lie would probably view as bad (e.g., immoral, unjustifiable, illegal). Three of our motive categories (instrumental, avoid punishment or blame, entitlement) were all generally related to the covering up of these various kinds of bad behavior.

Instrumental lies. Instrumental lies accounted for 32% of all of the serious lies, and were the most common of the seven motives. Instrumental lies fit Western culture's most damning portrait of liars and their lies. The tellers of instrumental lies are cold: No other category of liars reports experiencing any less distress while telling their lies than they do. They report this composure while telling the least justifiable and most interpersonally damaging of all of the types of serious lies—lies that make their targets feel defiant and angry. Instrumental liars were in some ways more indiscriminate in their lying than were other types of liars. Whereas serious lies generally involved a higher status person as the teller or target more often than a lower status person, instrumental lies involved higher and lower status people equally often. Whereas serious lies generally involved close relationship partners notably more often than casual partners, serious lies told for instrumental reasons involved strangers and acquaintances almost as often as they involved close partners. When the partners involved in instrumental lies were close relationship partners, they were almost always romantic partners, and the behavior concealed by instrumental lies was most often an affair. These instrumental lies were more often reported by the targets than by the liars.

Lies told to avoid punishment and blame. The second most common type of serious lies were those told to avoid punishment and blame (20%). In a typical story, a teenage boy gets into an accident while driving recklessly, then lies to his parents about it. Many more of these stories are described by liars than by targets, and almost all of these lies are told to cover bad behaviors (usually misdeeds). The lies are not well planned, probably because the trouble was unanticipated. The liars feel very distressed while telling these lies. Often they are telling these lies to higher status targets. They have gotten into trouble and they are scared. More so than most of the other categories of serious lies, those told to avoid punishment and blame were episodes from childhood. Only 20% of the lies described by the college students occurred when the students were under the age of 14, but 37% of the lies told to avoid punishment and blame occurred when the students were children.

Entitlement lies. In a characteristic entitlement story, a teenage girl is forbidden to attend a social event with a boy she likes, so she arranges to attend anyway and lie about it.

This was the most homogeneous of all motive categories. All of the entitlement lies covered bad behaviors (typically, forbidden socializing). All but 2 of the 23 entitlement lies were described by liars rather than targets. All but 3 of the entitlement lies were described by women. All but 2 involved close relationship partners (usually parents). Entitlement lies never involved a teller or target lower in status than the storyteller, and they were never described as occurring when the storyteller was a child (under 14 years old). None of the other types of lies were more carefully planned than the entitlement lies, and none were rated as significantly more justifiable (although the lies told to protect others were seen as nonsignificantly more justifiable). We think that this is the first report of entitlement lies. We did not anticipate this category ourselves until we heard it during pilot testing, and we have not found it described anywhere else.

Self-Serving Lies Told for Psychological Reasons

In contrast to the motives mentioned earlier, sometimes when people have done something that they know is bad, they lie primarily to avoid the embarrassment, confrontation, or relationship conflict that might ensue if they owned up to their unfortunate acts. Two of our motive categories correspond to these kinds of bad behavior. A similar motive category includes the nastiest of the psychological lies, the ones told specifically and deliberately to hurt another person. Although these do not cover bad behavior as such, the motive for telling these lies seems to be in keeping with personal psychological reasons.

Lies told to protect the liar. Lies told to protect the liar were the only type of lie described significantly more often by the community members than the college students. Like instrumental lies, self-protective lies were more often told to cover an affair than any other information. Often, the target or teller of the self-protective lie was a romantic partner. Self-protective lies were also told to hide personal facts and feelings, and information about money and jobs. In some instances, the liars are approached by targets for money (e.g., a loan or a raise), a promotion, or help with a project or a job; the liar promises to help but then does not do so. These liars seemed unable to decline these commitments but equally unable to honor them. Although the tellers of instrumental lies and self-protective lies are both serving their own needs (to get what they want or avoid conflict), self-protective liars differed significantly from the instrumental liars in that they felt great distress while telling their lies.

Identity lies. Lies told for reasons of identity management and self-presentation constituted 12% of all lies. The contents of these lies were typically identity-relevant, and ranged from specific personal facts and feelings (e.g., lying about one's age to a man at a bar) to more sweeping misrepresentations

of identity that amounted to living a lie (e.g., feigning marriage in discussions with one's coworkers for 20 years). The identity lies were rated as among the least justifiable of all of the categories of lies; only instrumental lies were rated as significantly worse. Yet for no other category of lies did the targets report any less sadness and anxiety than did the targets of identity lies. Although the targets could not seem to understand why the liars bothered to tell these kinds of lies, they were not pained by them. They probably appreciated that the liars were trying to impress them with these lies.

We thought that issues of identity would be more important to adolescents and young adults, so we expected them to describe more lies motivated by impression management. We found hints of the age trend we anticipated. None of the liar stories motivated by identity concerns were told when the liars were under 14 years old. Among the college students, 82% of the identity lies they described occurred when they were between 14 and 17 years old.

Hurtful lies. Lies told with the explicit intention of hurting others (with the lie or the behavior covered by the lie) were the most infrequent category (4%). Sixty percent of these lies were told by or to a romantic partner. No other kind of lie resulted in greater damage to the liar's relationship with the target.

Other-Oriented Lies

In the studies of everyday lies, lies told altruistically to benefit other people and spare their feelings accounted for one out of every four lies. In our serious lies research, the ratio of self-serving to other-oriented lies was a dramatic 9 to 1.

Lies told to protect others. Of the seven types of motives, only one was other-oriented: lies told to protect the other person. Within the college student sample, other-protective lies were more likely than most other types of lies to have occurred during the student's childhood. In a typical example, news of the impending death of a beloved family member is withheld from a child by the child's parents. These lies were described by targets twice as often as by liars. Three quarters of them covered information that would be distressing for the targets to hear. Usually, the information was about death or serious illness, but personal facts and feelings were also hidden by protective lies. Three out of four of these lies involved a close relationship partner, typically a parent.

The tellers of other-protective lies are similar to the tellers of self-protective lies in that both seem unable to tell the targets something that they know the targets will not want to hear. They differ, though, in that the other-protective lies are seen as substantially more justifiable than the self-protective lies. Also, the other-protective lies were described mostly by the college students, whereas the self-protective lies were described mostly by the community members.

Serious Lies in Close and Casual Relationships

One of the most striking and most important ways in which everyday lies differ from serious lies is in the degree to which they involve close relationship partners. People tell fewer of the little lies or everyday lies to their closer relationship partners (DePaulo & Kashy, 1998). In this work on serious lies, however—which were often deep betrayals of trust—we found that 64% of them involved as targets or tellers the participants' closest relationship partners: their parents, spouses and other romantic partners, best friends, and children. Only 22% of the serious lies occurred in relationships with casual partners (strangers and acquaintances), and the others occurred in relationships of intermediate closeness (other family members and friends). The degree to which the serious lies were told disproportionately to closer relationship partners varied significantly with the motives for the lies. However, in none of the seven instances were there more lies told to casual than to close relationship partners. In fact, when we examined the distribution of lies by all of our other subgroups, we found only one instance in which the number of lies involving casual relationship partners was greater (although still not significantly) than the number involving close partners, and that was for the men from the community sample.

In situations in which people are tempted to tell lies, there are typically two kinds of risks: the risk of disclosing the information that the lie would be designed to cover, and the risk of telling the lie and getting caught. In the realm of the ordinary, the stakes are low. The contents of everyday lies are typically unremarkable. People lie about their opinions, feelings, and preferences, and their small victories and losses. Owning up to this information amounts to admitting that you turned in a disappointing project at work, or that you really did feel hurt by a friend's criticism. Close relationship partners who make these admissions instead of lying could gain more for their honesty and openness than they lose in self-esteem. The closer the relationship, the more important such honesty might be.

In the domain of serious lies, however, the stakes are often much higher. With their serious lies, people are typically hiding much more serious matters, such as affairs. Disclosure of such information could pose a risk to what people value most in their lives, such as their reputations, their close relationships, and their jobs. At best, people who admit to serious transgressions might get credit for their honesty; but they could still be in trouble for their transgressions. A lie offers a most tempting escape, for if it succeeds, the transgressors get to engage in their bad behaviors (e.g., their affairs or their forbidden socializing) and keep their reputations, jobs, and relationships, too. Of course, the risks are high, for if the lie is discovered, the liar is in trouble for the bad behavior as well as for the lie. At the time when the lie is told, liars probably underestimate the likelihood that their lie will fail. (In this study, about half of the liar's lies were discovered.) They may

also tell themselves that they are planning to admit their transgression, but not just yet.

We have shown that the vast majority of serious lies originate with bad behaviors. Does this mean that people behave more badly in the context of their closer personal relationships? We cannot answer that with our data. However, even if the rates of bad behaviors were equal, or even lower, in closer relationships than in less close ones, the temptation to cover a bad behavior with a lie might be greater. One way this could occur is if the costs of admitting the bad behaviors were greater in closer relationships. For example, close relationship partners may have more opportunities to express their disapproval, and more ways of doing so, than casual partners. Moreover, the same expression of disapproval may be more stinging when it comes from a closer relationship partner. To the extent that closer relationship partners have higher expectations for the transgressors (Millar & Tesser, 1988), the loss of esteem they suffer by admitting their transgressions is even greater. The greatest risk of disclosing the transgression may be the loss of the relationship itself; this loss, too, is, of course, greater the closer (and presumably more valuable) the relationship (although recent research suggests that betrayal in relationships has a rather more complicated effect than the straightforward analysis of costs; Boon & McLeod, 2001).

The temptation to conceal a bad behavior with a lie might also be greater in closer relationships if the costs to the targets were greater in those relationships. An affair, for example, if disclosed, could disappoint a colleague but devastate a spouse. In closer relationships, people are more likely to see themselves as units (e.g., Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991). One implication may be that one person's reputation could be damaged by the other person's transgressions.

One final possibility is that our participants did not commit more seriously bad behaviors, nor did they tell more serious lies, in their closer relationships. Instead, they evaluated the same kinds of bad behaviors and the same kinds of lies more harshly when they were told in the context of closer relationships (Chapman, Hallahan, Ansfield, Boden, & DePaulo, 1998).

Sex Differences in Serious Lies

Women's friendships (Wright, 1998) and their social interactions (Reis, 1998) are more intimate than are those of men. Women are more likely than men to provide social support and to seek it, and to focus on emotions in the process (Kunkel & Burleson, 1998). They more often describe their conversation goals as helping, caring, comforting, and avoiding offense (Clark, 1998). How, then, do women view serious lies, which are so often undermining of intimacy and comfort? Their evaluations are harsh. Relative to men, they tended to view the serious lies as less justifiable. These were not just intensely negative reactions to being deceived (Le-

vine et al., 1992). Women also felt more distressed in their roles as tellers of serious lies, and they felt that their attitudes toward lying had become more negative as a consequence.

Women's conversations, relative to men's, are more often about other people (especially people of the opposite sex; Clark, 1998) and about personal and emotional topics (e.g., Wright, 1998). Women's serious lies are personal, too. They are personal in content, in that women tend to describe more lies about personal facts and feelings, whereas men describe more lies about money and jobs. The targets and tellers of lies in women's stories tend to be more personal, too: They are more often romantic partners, whereas the people who frequent men's stories are more often strangers and acquaintances.

Women also tell more serious lies to enable their own participation in forbidden interpersonal behaviors. When women wanted to see their boyfriends or sleep with them, go to dances, bars, late-night movies, and overnight camping trips with friends—when they felt that they should be entitled to do these things but were not allowed to—they lied. We think these findings underscore the importance of interpersonal relationships to women, especially in their late adolescent years. However, the sex difference in the telling of entitlement lies might also indicate a difference in how daughters and sons are treated by their parents. Perhaps parents are more controlling of their adolescent daughters' social behaviors than of their adolescent sons, so that daughters who want to date, mate, and party all night have few options other than to lie about these behaviors. The sons, in contrast, may already be "entitled" to do as they please.

Perspective Differences in Serious Lies

By asking participants to describe their most serious lies, rather than any serious lies, we hoped to elicit the lies that really were the most serious ones, and to minimize the possibility that participants would choose which lies to describe based on self-presentational concerns. The descriptions we elicited of lies told under oath, lies that resulted in murder, and lies about physical and sexual abuse, abortion, alcoholism, sexually transmitted diseases, thefts, cheating, and distributing drugs reassured us that we had collected many truly serious lies. We were concerned at first that 35% of the stories reported to us were not the most serious lies that the participants could have reported. However, those lies were rated as more serious ($M = 7.13$) than the other 65% of the lies ($M = 6.16$), $t(232) = 3.31$, $p < .001$.

If self-presentational considerations were important, the participants describing lies they had told to others (compared to those describing lies that others had told to them) might selectively choose less heinous lies. Some of our data seem consistent with that possibility. For example, the lies described from the liar's perspective were rated as less serious and more justifiable, and as resulting in less negative interpersonal consequences, than the lies described from the tar-

get's perspective. Also, the liars were much less likely than the targets to describe the most stereotypically cold and exploitative lies—the instrumental ones. Liars also less often described lies told to cover affairs.

Other results, however, fit less comfortably into the self-presentational explanation. For example, the lies that are regarded as the most justifiable, and that are seen as having the least damaging effects on the liar's relationship with the target, are the lies told to protect the target. Relatedly, lies told to hide news about death and serious illnesses, and about distressing information more generally, are likely to reflect less badly on the liars than most other kinds of lies. Yet it was the targets, and not the liars, who most often described these kinds of lies.

Although we cannot completely rule out the possibility that participants chose lies to describe based on self-presentational considerations, we think that cognitive considerations were important, too. We suggested that participants trying to come up with the most serious lie they ever told to someone else would use different search rules than those trying to recall the most serious lie anyone ever told to them. Those looking for a lie they told (liar lies) would try to think of a time when they would be tempted to tell a serious lie, and would come up with a situation in which they behaved in a way that others might condemn and that they would therefore want to hide. In contrast, those trying to think of a time when they were deceived by someone else would search for a time when they felt hurt, angry, and betrayed. Liars and targets are likely to describe different lies for another reason, too. Targets cannot select from all of the lies that were told to them because some lies go undiscovered. Liars cannot always use the complement of the strategy used by targets to select lies—that is, search for times when they caused another person to feel hurt, angry, and betrayed—because targets do not always let the liars know when they have discovered their lies, and when they do, they may not fully express their emotional reactions.

Our differential search hypothesis predicts that liars will, more often than targets, describe lies told to cover bad behaviors. It also predicts that liars will more often describe the other person in their story as someone of higher status than themselves, because higher status persons are more often in control of the punishments meted out for bad behaviors. Targets are instead relatively more likely to describe someone of equal status as the person who betrayed them. The data were consistent with these predictions. Liars, compared to targets, tended to describe more lies that originated in bad behaviors. They told entitlement lies, often to cover their forbidden socializing, and they also told many lies to avoid punishment and blame, often for their misdeeds. More of the liar lies involved higher status persons, whereas more of the lies described by the targets involved same-status persons. The specific relationship partners involved in the lies were more often strangers and acquaintances (who can be people in positions of authority; e.g., teachers and law enforcement offi-

cial) and parents in the liars' stories; in the targets' stories, they were relatively more likely to be romantic partners, friends, and best friends. In studies focused specifically on betrayal, spouses and friends are most often named as the betrayers and the betrayed (Jones et al., 1991).

The differential search hypothesis can account for the other differences we found. If targets searched for times when they felt deeply betrayed, then they may in fact have found episodes in which the lies were less justifiable and more serious, and more destructive of the liar–target relationship than did the liars. The targets' search for episodes in which they felt especially hurt and betrayed would also result in more accounts of lies about affairs, and of the cold and destructive instrumental lies. Their search for times when they felt distress would also uncover protective lies, especially those told to hide distressing information, such as news of the serious illness or death of a loved one.

Finally, as we predicted, liars and targets did not have the opportunities to draw from the same set of lies for their stories. The liars reported that 49% of their lies were never discovered, and the targets said that the liars remained unaware of their discovery of 30% of the lies they described.

Serious Lies and Serious Life Tasks

We think that when we asked people to tell us about their most serious lies, they also told us something about what is most important to them in their lives, including the people who matter most to them and the issues that most engage them. Although we could not make direct statistical comparisons, the stories of college students and community members appeared to take on somewhat different patterns. For the college students, who were no more than 21 years old, their parents were still at the center of their lives. A greater proportion of the college students named their parents as the targets and tellers of their most serious lies than did the community members. The community members, who ranged in age up to 84 and who sometimes had children, a spouse, and a job, probably had many more important interactions with people they hardly knew. More often than the college students, they named strangers and acquaintances as targets and tellers of their serious lies. In their ordinary adult tasks of paying taxes, buying and selling homes, and interacting with salespeople and business associates, the community members had more opportunities to have significant exchanges, including deceptive ones, with strangers and acquaintances.

Men from the community were especially likely to name strangers and acquaintances in their serious lies, and to describe lies about jobs and money. These were probably traditional men, for whom breadwinning was central to their identities. They were the only group of the four (college and community men and women) who did not name close relationship partners in a disproportionate number of their stories.

For children and teenagers, issues of maturity, perhaps especially emotional maturity, may be central life concerns. The implication that they might not be able to handle deeply distressing news is likely to be threatening and upsetting; the withholding of information on those grounds is likely to be viewed by them as a serious lie. For late adolescent girls, dating and other socializing may be especially important; restrictions on those coveted behaviors may seem so intolerable as to merit the telling of serious lies to circumvent them.

There were some stories that were, at first, surprising to us, including many of the tales of misdeeds. Stealing coins from a sibling or eating all the icing on a cake do not seem to be matters of great consequence. However, that assessment is from our adult point of view, and many of these misdeeds were committed by children. To young children, staying out of trouble and behaving like good boys and girls may be life tasks that are just as significant to them as emotional maturity is to teens or job success is to traditional adult men. When the children failed at those tasks, the lies they told to cover their failures were sufficiently meaningful to be described as their most serious lies many years later.

Limitations

One of our arguments is that serious lies differ markedly from most of the little lies of everyday life. Our results strongly supported that point of view, but our methodology differed from the methodology used in the studies of everyday lies. We would like our conclusions to be replicated in research in which both kinds of lies are examined under the same methodological microscope. For example, Chapman et al. (1998) used a series of vignettes to examine what aspects of lies affected participants' ratings of the seriousness of lies.

We have shown that serious lies often begin with behaviors that would be considered bad by significant persons in the transgressors' lives. However, we do not know what the actual occurrence of bad behaviors, or distressing information, or unattainable wishes really was in the lives of our participants. So, for example, if some participants did not describe a lie about an affair as their most serious lie, we cannot know if they had never had an affair, or if they did but did not lie about it, or did lie, but did not consider the lie to be their most serious one. In future studies, this information should be collected, although it would be impossible to anticipate every conceivable category of bad behavior or distressing information or wishes that could tempt the telling of a serious lie.

Methodologically, we would like to test our ideas experimentally; for example, by randomly assigning participants to have affairs and smash cars, then see whether they lie about it. The experimental approach would provide more compelling answers to questions about motives than the methodology we have used here of inferring motives from participants' stories. Of course, we cannot and would not do the study we just suggested, and so we instead tried to learn about serious lies by the very different approach of autobiographical narratives. That

methodology has been used successfully to pursue other topics that are equally unamenable to experimental tests (e.g., Baumeister & Newman, 1994; Harvey, Weber, & Orbach, 1990; Heatherton & Nichols, 1994), and with reasonable levels of accuracy (e.g., Barclay, 1988; Rubin & Kozin, 1984). We believe that the use of that methodology in this research has elucidated some of the most important contexts, emotions, and motives involved in the telling of people's most serious lies, and pointed the way to future research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The studies were supported in part by grants from the National Institute of Mental Health and the National Science Foundation. We thank Reg Adams, Karen Dale, Jennifer Goldman, and Geoff Hensgen for their help with this research.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, D. E., Ansfield, M. E., & DePaulo, B. M. (1999). Love's best habit: Deception in the context of relationships. In P. Philippot, R. S. Feldman, & E. J. Coats (Eds.), *The social context of nonverbal behavior* (pp. 372–409). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., & Smollan, D. (1992). Inclusion of other in the self and the structure of interpersonal closeness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*, 596–612.
- Aron, A., Aron, E. N., Tudor, M., & Nelson, G. (1991). Close relationships as including other in the self. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*, 241–253.
- Barclay, C. R. (1988). Truth and accuracy in autobiographical memory. In M. M. Gruneberg, P. E. Morris, & R. N. Sykes (Eds.), *Practical aspects of memory* (Vol. 1, pp. 289–294). New York: Wiley.
- Barnes, J. A. (1994). *A pack of lies*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Baumeister, R. F., & Newman, L. S. (1994). How stories make sense of personal experiences: Motives that shape autobiographical narratives. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *20*, 676–690.
- Baumeister, R. F., Stillwell, A., & Wotman, S. R. (1990). Victim and perpetrator accounts of interpersonal conflict: Autobiographical narratives about anger. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *59*, 994–1005.
- Baumeister, R. F., Wotman, S. R., & Stillwell, A. M. (1993). Unrequited love: On heartbreak, anger, guilt, scriptlessness, and humiliation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*, 377–394.
- Bok, S. (1978). *Lying*. New York: Vintage.
- Boon, S. D., & McLeod, B. A. (2001). Deception in romantic relationships: Subjective estimates of success at deceiving and attitudes toward deception. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *18*, 463–476.
- Camden, C., Motley, M. T., & Wilson, A. (1984). White lies in interpersonal communication: A taxonomy and preliminary investigation of social motivations. *Western Journal of Speech Communications*, *48*, 309–325.
- Chapman, J., Hallahan, M., Ansfield, M. E., Boden, J. M., & DePaulo, B. M. (1998, May). The perceived seriousness of lies. Poster presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Society, Washington, DC.
- Clark, R. A. (1998). A comparison of topics and objectives in a cross section of young men's and women's everyday conversations. In D. J. Canary & K. Dindia (Eds.), *Sex differences and similarities in communication* (pp. 303–319). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- DePaulo, B. M., & Kashy, D. A. (1998). Everyday lies in close and casual relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 63–79.
- 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.
- Folkes, V. S. (1982). Communicating the reasons for social rejection. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *18*, 235–252.
- Hansson, R. O., Jones, W. H., & Fletcher, W. L. (1990). Troubled relationships in later life: Implications for support. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *7*, 451–463.
- Harvey, J. H., Weber, A. L., & Orbach, T. L. (1990). *Interpersonal accounts: A social psychological perspective*. Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell.
- Heatherton, T. F., & Nichols, P. A. (1994). Personal accounts of successful versus failed attempts at life change. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *20*, 664–675.
- Jones, W. H., & Burdette, M. P. (1993). Betrayal in close relationships. In A. L. Weber & J. Harvey (Eds.), *Perspectives on close relationships* (pp. 1–14). New York: Allyn & Bacon.
- Jones, W. H., Cohn, M. G., & Miller, C. E. (1991). Betrayal among children and adults. In K. J. Rotenberg (Ed.), *Children's interpersonal trust* (pp. 118–134). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Kashy, D. A., & DePaulo, B. M. (1996). Who lies? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *70*, 1037–1051.
- Kunkel, A. W., & Burleson, B. R. (1998). Social support and the emotional lives of men and women: An assessment of the different cultures perspective. In D. J. Canary & K. Dindia (Eds.), *Sex differences and similarities in communication* (pp. 101–125). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Leary, M. R., Springer, C., Negel, L., Ansell, E., & Evans, K. (1998). The causes, phenomenology, and consequences of hurt feelings. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *74*, 1225–1237.
- Levine, T. R., McCornack, S. A., & Avery, P. B. (1992). Sex differences in emotional reactions to discovered deception. *Communication Quarterly*, *40*, 289–296.
- Lippard, P. V. (1988). "Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies": Situational exigencies for interpersonal deception. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *52*, 91–103.
- McCornack, S. A., & Levine, T. R. (1990). When lies are uncovered: Emotional and relational outcomes of discovered deception. *Communication Monographs*, *57*, 119–138.
- Metts, S. (1989). An exploratory investigation of deception in close relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *6*, 159–179.
- Metts, S. (1994). Relational transgressions. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 217–239). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Millar, K. U., & Tesser, A. (1988). Deceptive behavior in social relationships: A consequence of violated expectations. *Journal of Psychology*, *122*, 263–273.
- Nyberg, D. (1993). *The varnished truth*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Planalp, S., & Honeycutt, J. M. (1985). Events that increase uncertainty in personal relationships. *Human Communication Research*, *11*, 593–604.
- Reis, H. (1998). Gender differences in intimacy and related behaviors: Context and process. In D. J. Canary & K. Dindia (Eds.), *Sex differences and similarities in communication* (pp. 203–231). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Rubin, D. C., & Kozin, M. (1984). Vivid memories. *Cognition*, *16*, 81–95.
- Wright, P. H. (1998). Toward an expanded orientation to the study of sex differences in friendship. In D. J. Canary & K. Dindia (Eds.), *Sex differences and similarities in communication* (pp. 41–63). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Youniss, J., & Smollar, J. (1985). *Adolescent relations with mothers, fathers, and friends*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Copyright of Basic & Applied Social Psychology is the property of Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.