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Lindsey, Lisa L. Massi; Dunbar, Norah E.; Russell, Jessica C.

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# **RISKY BUSINESS OR MANAGED EVENT? PERCEPTIONS OF POWER AND DECEPTION IN THE WORKPLACE**

**Lisa L. Massi Lindsey, Naval Postgraduate School  
Norah E. Dunbar, University of Oklahoma  
Jessica C. Russell, Michigan State University**

## **ABSTRACT**

*The workplace poses unique challenges for liars, especially for deception between supervisors and subordinates. To that end, the current study examined deception in the workplace between supervisors and subordinates to explore perceptions of deception and the relationship between power and deception. Participants were recruited from organizations and universities and reported their perceptions of power in their manager-subordinate relationships, perceptions of deception, and perceptions of the risk involved with a recent lie they told to a supervisor or subordinate. Results indicated that the perceived power difference between supervisors and subordinates was substantial, power impacted perceptions of deception in the workplace and how deceptive messages were crafted, and very few of the reported lies were detected. Theoretical implications of the findings are discussed.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Deception is a part of everyday social interaction. In fact, some scholars argue that deception is a fact of social life rather than an extraordinary or unusual event (Kashy & DePaulo, 1998). Often deception goes undetected, but if a lie is told to an authority figure the repercussions can be serious. Some researchers argue that manipulative ability is a foundation of social power and the ability to lie successfully is an important skill linked to personal and professional success (DePaulo, LeMay, & Epstein, 1991). The motivations and the risks for people deceiving authority figures is likely quite different from the motivations of the deceptive authority figures themselves. Thus, the goals of the current study were to investigate the link between power and deception, understand how deception occurs in the workplace, and identify the impact of deception on power-laden relationships.

## **Deception Defined**

Although definitions abound in the literature, the current investigation conceptualized deception as the successful or unsuccessful deliberate attempt, without forewarning, to create in another a belief which the communicator considers to be false (Vrij, 2000). This definition emphasizes that deception is an intentional, strategic act and does not necessarily require the use of words. Although many consider deception to include only outright fabrications or blatant lies, deception can take many forms including concealment, omissions, exaggerations, half-truths, misdirection, and even playfulness such as tricking or bluffing (Buller & Burgoon, 1994). Telling literal truths that are designed to mislead should be considered deception, as well. For example, when President Clinton told the American public that he “did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky” he gave the impression that nothing sexual happened when he meant that they had not had sexual intercourse (Vrij, 2000). Unfortunately, trying to determine what strategy the speaker is using, whether it is omission, fabrication, or deception embedded with truths, requires knowledge of the speaker’s intent and his or her existing knowledge. As such, we will follow the example of other scholars and will be using the terms “lying” and “deception” interchangeably through this manuscript (Masip, Garrido, & Herrero, 2004; Vrij, 2008).

The reasons for deception depend greatly on the situation and the motives of the deceiver. In a pair of diary studies of lying in everyday life, people admitted telling between 0 and 46 lies a day (DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer, & Epstein, 1996). DePaulo and colleagues (DePaulo & Bell, 1996; DePaulo & Kashy, 1998; Kashy & DePaulo, 1996) differentiate between self-oriented lies that benefit the deceiver and other-oriented lies that are told for another person’s benefit. In addition, Vrij (2000) further elaborated on the motives for deception which include deceiving in order to make a positive impression on others, protecting themselves from disapproval or embarrassment, obtaining an advantage, making others appear better or to benefit others in some way, or protecting a social relationship. Some of these motives may be both self- and other-oriented such as when you are dishonest about an embarrassing topic to save your own face and prevent embarrassment on the part of the interaction partner. The power relationship between the two interactants is one situational variable that might greatly influence the type of deception used and the reason for the deception. The motives for deception change when speaking to someone who differs in status.

## **Power and Deception**

Dominance and power have been regarded for some time by sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and communication scholars as one of the fundamental dimensions of interpersonal relationships (e.g., Burgoon & Hale, 1984). Power influences how people in relationships interact with each other, both verbally and nonverbally, and determines whether they engage in or avoid

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conflict. Also, power influences what types of messages will be used when attempting to reconcile incompatible goals in conflict situations. Power is a social concept that involves a relationship between two parties that goes beyond the individual (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005; Langner & Keltner, 2008). A definition of power is elusive, but despite the many definitions of power that exist in the literature, scholars from diverse fields are converging on the definition of power generally as the capacity to produce intended effects, and in particular, the ability to influence the behavior of another person (see Berger, 1994 for a more thorough review of definitions of power in social interaction).

Power is often derived from certain power bases which are resources such as rewards or knowledge possessed by individuals that form the basis for control over others. French and Raven (1959) identified five power bases that have been used extensively in the communication literature. The five bases include reward power and coercive power which represent, respectively, a person's right to reward and punish; legitimate power, which is power that comes from holding a high status position that is sanctioned by society; referent power, which is the power that results when others admire and emulate a person; and expert power, which is derived from having expertise in a needed field. Other scholars have since added additional power bases such as informational power which stems from the ability to persuade another (Raven, Centers, & Rodrigues, 1975) and credibility (Aguinis, Simonsen, & Pierce, 1998). Additionally, supervisors in the workplace may also have personality traits or leadership qualities that have lead them to their more powerful position and on which they draw when they need to influence or control others (Schmid Mast & Hall, 2003). Although supervisors typically have access to most, if not all, of these power bases, deception is a way to manipulate information and thus may be used by any party to increase informational power over another. Buller and Burgoon (1994) argued that deceptive individuals strategically manipulate their messages in four ways through the use of: (1) uncertainty and vagueness, (2) nonimmediacy, reticence, and withdrawal, (3) disassociation, and (4) image- and relationship-protecting behavior. The particular strategy one chooses might depend on the power relationship between the interactants.

Deceptiveness is a particularly important influence strategy when considering power differences because power is not always salient in every interaction. Komter (1989) distinguishes between manifest power and latent power. Manifest power concerns the visible outcomes of power such as open conflicts or direct verbal and nonverbal strategies used to achieve certain ends. Latent power is identified when the needs of the powerful person are identified or conflicts are avoided due to fear of retaliation by the powerful partner. According to dyadic power theory (DPT; Dunbar, 2004; Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005), dyads with high power differences, such as those in the supervisor-subordinate relationship in the workplace, are more likely to use latent power strategies than those who are relatively equal in power. Extremely powerful individuals do not need to make their influence attempts manifest because by virtue of their powerful position; they may maintain control without even appearing dominant. By the same token, powerless individuals are unlikely to

express their grievances if they fear that retaliation, termination of the relationship, or other negative relational consequences will result from their control attempt (Dunbar, 2004). These individuals weigh the potential gain or loss of engaging in conflict and find that tolerating or accommodating a conflict at a minor cost is more beneficial than running the risk of pursuing the conflict and disrupting the relationship (Leung, 1988). Dunbar does not make specific predictions about the types of strategies power-unequal dyads will use in place of overt dominance but because of its surreptitious nature, deception is necessarily a latent strategy and is consistent with the power use strategies of those either high or low in power in the workplace. For example, individuals may use deception to avoid confrontation with a supervisor or subordinate at work or to protect their power position in the workplace if they fear the truth will cause them to lose credibility. On the other hand, supervisors may use deception in order to maintain their informational power over their subordinates by concealing information that would weaken their position.

Research examined the connection between deception and power by examining deception between students and teachers (Kaye, 1991), teachers and administrators (Sweetland & Hoy, 2001), parents and children, (Knox, Zusman, McGinty, & Gescheidler, 2001; Thomas, Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield, 1995), doctors and patients (Burgoon, Callister, & Hunsaker, 1994; Fainzang, 2002), social workers and clients (Kagle, 1998), police officers and suspects (Vrij, 1994), supervisors and subordinates in the workplace (Barrick & Mount, 1996), and even researchers and subjects (Korn, 1997). Indeed, Hample (1980) argued that three out of four lies are told to economic or social supervisors. The relationship between power and deception detection, however, is an under-studied topic and warrants further investigation. Previous research suggested that those who are lower in power can detect deception more effectively than others (Bugental, Shennum, Frank, & Ekman, 2001) although this finding contradicts other research that suggested dominant individuals are highly skilled at deception and whose lies are more difficult to detect (Burgoon & Dunbar, 2000; Cody & O'Hair, 1983; Keating & Heltman, 1994). Thus, it is unclear who in the relationship will find it more difficult to detect deception and what tactics they will use to perpetuate deceptive communication.

The motives for deception of those in a position of power differ greatly from those in a position of powerlessness. For example, in the doctor-patient relationship (where physicians' expertise gives them greater power over patients), doctors and patients have different reasons for lying. Fainzang (2002) argued that doctors might lie in order to emphasize the importance of treatment, such as telling alcoholics that even one drink will cause them to relapse into alcoholism when the doctor is aware that moderate consumption of alcohol is possible and has been used successfully by other patients. Patients, on the other hand, might lie to their physicians when they do not take their medication as prescribed or do not tell their physician about prior treatments, such as homeopathic treatments, when they fear disapproval from their doctor (Fainzang, 2002). Burgoon et al. (1994) contend that 32% of patients overtly lie to their doctors and 85% use some form of concealment or equivocation strategy. Also, Kagle (1998) illuminated the use of deception by

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patients towards their social workers as a method to establish boundaries, establish and maintain their identities, and address imbalances of power whether real or perceived.

### **Deception and Power in the Workplace**

The workplace is a unique context because the power hierarchies are more formalized than in most interpersonal relationships and deception is often seen as a necessary strategy when climbing the corporate ladder. Although most people see lying in business negotiations as highly unethical, although they might be willing to do so if they have a specific goal or do not foresee any harm that will result from their deception (Aquino & Becker, 2005). In fact, in Robinson, Shepherd, and Heywood's (1998) study of college students, 83% said they would lie in order to get a job and said they believed prospective employers were expecting them to exaggerate their qualities in a job interview. Nearly half of managers interviewed by Strout (2002) suspected their sales representatives had lied to clients in their sales calls. Scholl and O'Hair (2005) argued that the decision to use deception might be a way to react to seemingly uncontrollable circumstances, particularly when the individual lacks the efficacy to deal with them in more honest ways. Indvik and Johnson (2009) argue that lying is more prevalent in the workplace than the home because the workplace is seen as more impersonal. Whatever the reason, if the workplace is like other contexts, deception is a common occurrence.

When people lie at work, however, it is not without consequence (Indvik & Johnson, 2009). DePaulo et al. (1991) argued that leaders incur large risks because with every lie told they gamble their future credibility. Leaders are motivated, at the very least, by their desire to maintain social power so lying to subordinates can be a dangerous communicative ploy. Logically, deception is dangerous; leaders perceived as deceptive will carry with them an unethical reputation and lose their ability to lead. Trust harmed by deception never recovers fully (Schweitzer, Hershey, & Bradlow, 2006). On the other hand, leaders often have many of the personality traits associated with more frequent lying including Machiavellianism, social adroitness, and sociability (Kashy & DePaulo, 1996). Burgoon and Dunbar (2000) found that the profile of dominant individuals is in many ways isomorphic with those who can deceive and avoid detection.

Additionally, subordinates and less powerful people have motivation to deceive their supervisors. Studies indicated that subordinates often use deception to manage their supervisor's impressions (Barrick & Mount, 1996; Deluga, 1991). Deception on the part of less powerful individuals appears to be a common occurrence but differential power might place subordinates in a dangerous position if their deception is detected (e.g., an employee would get fired for lying to the boss). The result might be an anxiety-inducing situation in which deception detection is most likely (McCornack & Levine, 1990).

Risk is involved for both supervisors and subordinates and both are motivated to appear credible even when being deceptive; however, important differences might exist in the ways these

are perceived by supervisors and subordinates. Therefore, to better understand deception in the workplace, the following research questions were posed:

*RQ1: Do supervisors and subordinates differ in their perceptions of power, risk, willingness to lie, ability to lie, or the acceptability of lying?*

*RQ2: What is the relationship between one's perceived power in the manager-employee relationship and one's willingness to lie, perceived ability to lie, perceived acceptability of being lied to, and perceived risk of deception?*

*RQ3: Do supervisors and subordinates differ regarding the circumstances and topics under which they are willing to use deception?*

It should be noted that this investigation considers *perceived* power differences rather than actual or structural power differences and their effect on deception. Although there is a structural power difference between supervisors and subordinates in the workplace, the interactants must perceive that this power difference is relevant in order for it to control their actions. Cloven and Roloff (1993; Roloff & Cloven, 1990) argue it is “the *perceptions* individuals have of *potential* actions that induces the chilling effect...these expectations may or may not be shared by relational partners, and whether the powerful partner actually or intentionally withdraws rewards to responds aggressively is less important than the perception that he or she might take such action” (p. 201, italics in original). In other words, subordinates lie to their supervisors at work because they fear the repercussions of the truth (why they were late to work or why they broke a rule of the workplace) even if the supervisor would really not punish them for telling the truth. Thus, the perception of powerfulness is more important than the actual power discrepancy dictated by the organizational hierarchy.

### **Cues to Deception Detection Accuracy**

A substantial body of literature explored issues related to deception accuracy and to the identification of specific cues that differentiate liars from truth-tellers (Cody and O’Hair, 1983). Specific nonverbal cues, such as a lack of eye contact or foot tapping, are often thought to be associated with deception; however, few cues are reliable indicators of deception (Zuckerman & Driver, 1985). Despite the depth of this literature, extant research provided inconsistent findings about our ability to detect the deceiver (O’Hair, Cody, & McLaughlin, 1981). A recent meta-analysis by Bond and DePaulo (2006) examined 206 studies and found the average detection accuracy reported is only 54% (not far from what could be expected by chance). Nonverbal cues have been supported in some studies (Cody & O’Hair, 1983), but others argued deception cannot be revealed

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in the moment. DePaulo, and colleagues' (2003) meta-analysis of 158 cues to deception revealed that many behaviors showed no discernible links, or only weak links, to deceit. Park, Levine, McCornack, Morrison, and Ferrara (2002) contended, in reality, people do not discover lies for days, weeks, or even months and deception is typically revealed by a third party, making non-verbal cues leaked during the deception quite irrelevant. Verbal cues were only slightly more reliable, and research suggested that deceivers are less forthcoming than those who tell the truth and their lies are less plausible, less likely to be structured in a logical, sensible way, and more likely to be internally discrepant or to convey ambivalence than truthful statements (DePaulo et al., 2003). This body of research led to the following research questions:

*RQ4: What strategies do supervisors and subordinates use to make deceptive messages effective?*

*RQ5: When telling a lie to supervisors or subordinates, on what do people base their deceptive messages (e.g., where does one get the idea to use the particular deceptive message they used)?*

### **STUDY OVERVIEW**

The typical deception study takes place in a laboratory setting; unfortunately, the lab might be an intimidating place to deceive. When people enter a research setting, they instantly know they are being evaluated which might alter their natural behavior. In addition, it is difficult to account for motivation in a lab setting. Ekman (1985) argued that lies in contrived laboratory settings do not have the same repercussions as real-life lies, which results in lower motivation to lie successfully. DePaulo et al. (2003) argued that cues to deception are more pronounced when people are motivated to succeed, especially when the motivations are identity-relevant rather than monetary or material. The current investigation's interest in motivation for the deception means that experimental methods were not preferred; therefore, a quasi-experimental design was used to ask participants about their real experiences with deception in situations with a power differential, the workplace.

The current study was quite different from the types of research most other scholars have conducted in the area of deception. It was modeled on the Park et al. (2002) study because we asked participants to recall real instances of deception and describe how and when the deception was detected (if in fact it was detected) and what messages were used to create credible impressions. Whereas Park et al. were interested in the perceptions of the deception recipients, this study is interested in the perceptions of the lie perpetrators because there are likely many instances where deception occurs but is not detected.



## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 214 currently employed individuals, recruited from organizations throughout a Western state and from three universities in the same state (approximately 50% of participants were college students), who reported on their attitudes towards deception. A subset of the sample ( $n = 96$ ) reported on an actual deception incident they recalled. The initial goal was to sample a non-student population by recruiting participants through local organizations, but many organizations were reluctant to allow access to their employees given the sensitive nature of the topic of the current research. Thus, this investigation included employed university students to increase the sample size. Forty-five percent of the respondents reported being a manager/supervisor (55% of the sample was therefore coded as being subordinates), and the number of people managers supervised ranged from 1 to 241 ( $M = 25.43$ ,  $SD = 43.45$ , median = 10.00).

With regard to place of work, 18.20% identified their company type as corporate, 18.20% were military, 15.90% were retail/sales, 10.30% were food service, 6.50% were education, 4.70% were real estate and mortgage, 4.20% were medical and dental, 4.20% were civil servants (e.g., local and state government), and the remaining participants reported myriad other company types (e.g., construction, non-profit, legal profession). Thirty-five percent of respondents indicated their place of work was a national organization, 22.40% were small business, 16.40% were local/regional business, 14.00% were global/international organizations, 10.30% were statewide organizations, and 1.90% did not indicate the type of organization. The number of employees who worked at the same physical locations as the respondents ranged from 1 to 6,000 ( $M = 280.87$ ,  $SD = 861.48$ , median = 35.00).

Participants ranged in age from 18 to 73 years old ( $M = 27.50$ ,  $SD = 8.83$ , median = 24.00). Ninety-eight participants (45.80%) were male, 49.50% were female (4.70% declined to state their sex); 59.30% reported their race/ethnicity as Caucasian, 10.70% were Hispanic, 9.30% were Asian, 4.70% were African American, 3.70% were Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 2.80% identified their race/ethnicity as Middle Eastern, 0.50% were Native American, and 8.90% declined to state their race/ethnicity. Respondents' annual income ranged from under \$30,000 to over \$100,000 (median = \$30,000).

### Procedure

Survey data were collected to answer the proposed research questions. Respondents first read and signed a consent form assuring them that their participation would be anonymous and confidential, and that the data would only be reported in aggregate form. Second, participants were asked to provide information regarding their place of work (e.g., type of company, how many

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employees work at the respondent's primary work location). Next participants were asked, "Thinking about your primary role at work, do you consider yourself a **supervisor** or **manager**." Respondents who answered "yes" were coded as supervisors and completed the supervisor survey. Participants who answered "no" were coded as subordinates and were asked to skip to the subordinate survey. Both surveys were identical (e.g., same items) with the exception that each item was worded to ask about respondents' supervisors or subordinates, depending on the primary role they self-identified. Supervisors were informed, "In the questions that follow, 'subordinates' refers to any or all people you supervise, manage, or work under you." Subordinates were informed, "In the questions that follow, the term 'supervisor,' refers to your 'boss' or 'manager' or any people who supervise or monitor your work."

After describing their places of work and identifying their primary role at work, all respondents completed a series of scales to assess their willingness to engage in deception with their supervisor/subordinates. Next, they answered an open-ended item asking them to explain the circumstances under which they would be willing to deceive the people they supervise (subordinates were asked about deceiving their supervisors). Subsequently, all participants completed scales to assess their perceived ability to lie, their subordinates'/supervisors' ability to lie, and their perceptions of power in the supervisor-subordinate relationship.

Next, respondents were instructed, "Now we would like you to think of a **recent situation where you lied to your supervisor(s) [subordinate(s)]**. When you answer each of the following questions, please keep this incident in mind and answer each question **as completely as possible**." Participants were told that if they had never lied to a supervisor/subordinate, they should skip to the demographic section on the last page of the survey ( $n = 118$ ). Those respondents who did report a recent deception event ( $n = 96$ ) were asked a series of open-ended items regarding that event (e.g., the topic on which they lied, the setting in which they lied, what they said, how the supervisor/subordinate discovered the lie, if at all). Finally, all participants answered a series of demographic items.

## **Instrumentation**

Except where noted, measures were comprised of seven-point, Likert-type items on a scale ranging from one (very strongly disagree) to seven (very strongly agree), and were scored such that higher scores indicated greater perceptions of the construct being measured. Given that certain items were specified a priori to measure specific factors, confirmatory factor analysis was employed to test the measurement model (Anderson, Gerbing, & Hunter, 1987; Hunter & Gerbing, 1982; Levine, 2005). The data were found to be consistent with the proposed factors. Specifically, internal consistency tests showed that (a) inter-item correlations were substantial – mean inter-item correlations ranged from .78 to .92, and (b) the errors calculated between items measuring the same construct were within sampling error of zero (all were  $\leq |.07|$ ). Likewise, the parallelism test

indicated that the errors calculated between items measuring different constructs were within sampling error of zero (all were  $\leq |.09|$ ).

### **Power**

A seven-item scale (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005) was used to measure participants' perceptions of power in the subordinate-supervisor relationships on which they were reporting in the study (e.g., "In general, who has more power in this relationship?"). Power was measured on a seven-point scale such that higher scores indicated greater perceptions of the participants' own power in the relationship (i.e., 1 = my subordinate/supervisor, 4 = both equally, 7 = me). Respondents' perceptions of relational power had a mean of 3.86 ( $SD = 1.59$ , skewness, = 0.12, kurtosis = -1.36,  $\alpha = .88$ ).

### **Perceived risk of deception**

Among those participants who reported using deception, five items were used to measure their perceptions of the risk involved with the deception and included statements such as "Before I lied, I knew that there were serious consequences if I was caught lying." Perceived risk had a mean of 3.80 ( $SD = 1.49$ , skewness, = 0.28, kurtosis = -0.39,  $\alpha = .83$ ).

### **Willingness to lie to supervisor/subordinates**

All respondents' willingness to lie was measured in two ways. First, four items were employed to measure the degree to which participants were willing to engage in deception generally and included items such as "*In general*, I would feel comfortable lying to [the people I supervise *or* my supervisor]." Generalized willingness to lie had a mean of 2.26 ( $SD = 1.48$ , skewness, = 1.29, kurtosis = 0.84,  $\alpha = .95$ ). Second, four items were employed to measure the degree to which participants were willing to engage in deception when they perceived it was necessary and included items such as "I am willing to lie to [the people who work for me *or* my supervisor] *when a situation calls for it*." Respondents' willingness to lie when necessary had a mean of 3.46 ( $SD = 1.93$ , skewness, = 0.24, kurtosis = -1.24,  $\alpha = .96$ ).

### **Ability to lie**

All participants' ability to lie was measured in four ways. The first two scales related to participants' perceptions of their own ability to deceive. First, four items measured respondents' ability to lie in general and included items such as "*In general*, I think I am a good liar." Generalized self ability to lie had a mean of 3.58 ( $SD = 1.88$ , skewness, = 0.18, kurtosis = -1.22,  $\alpha = .97$ ).

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Second, four items measured participants' ability to lie to their supervisor/subordinates. For example, items were worded such that supervisors were asked about their ability to lie to their subordinates (example item: "When I lie to [the people I supervise or my supervisor], I can get away with the deception"). Respondents' ability to lie to their supervisors/subordinates had a mean of 3.27 ( $SD = 1.78$ , skewness, = 0.23, kurtosis = -1.11,  $\alpha = .95$ ).

The next two scales related to participants' perceptions of their supervisor's/subordinate's ability to deceive them. Four items measured subordinates' perceptions of their supervisor's ability to lie *in general* (or supervisor's perceptions of their subordinates' ability to lie *in general*). This scale included items such as. "In general, [my subordinates are or my supervisor is] good at lying." Respondents' perceptions of their supervisors'/subordinates' ability to lie *in general* had a mean of 3.38 ( $SD = 1.51$ , skewness, = 0.30, kurtosis = -0.35,  $\alpha = .94$ ). Finally, three items measured subordinates' perceptions of their supervisor's ability to lie *to them* (or supervisor's perceptions of their subordinates' ability to lie *to them*). This scale included items such as. "[The people I supervise or My supervisor] can lie well *to me*." Participants' perceptions of their supervisors/subordinates ability to lie to them had a mean of 3.01 ( $SD = 1.48$ , skewness, = 0.41, kurtosis = -0.29,  $\alpha = .97$ ).

### **Acceptability of being lied to by supervisor/subordinates**

Among all respondents, three items were used to measure the degree to which they believed it was acceptable for somebody to deceive them and included statements such as "In general, I think it is ok for [the people I supervise or my supervisor] to lie to me." Perceptions of deception acceptability had a mean of 1.62 ( $SD = 1.07$ , skewness, = 2.48, kurtosis = 7.37,  $\alpha = .87$ ).

### **Open-ended items**

To answer five of the research questions, participants were asked to answer a series of open-ended questions (each is reported in the results section with the analysis of its respective RQ). Two coders worked independently to develop a precise coding scheme for each research question, save some codes that were developed a priori by the researchers based on previous research. After roughly 35% of the responses to each question had been coded, the coders met with one of the authors to review the codebook. After the categories were reviewed and any discrepancies were resolved, each of the coders worked independently to code the remaining data (all responses were coded independently by both coders). Overall, coders spent approximately 70 hours coding participant responses. Cohen's kappa was used to calculate inter-coder reliability on the final coding scheme as it compensates for agreements by chance (Cohen, 1960). Strong reliability was established from 100% of the data (Cohen's Kappa = .92).

## RESULTS

### Overview

Ninety-six participants (44.86% of the total sample) reported using deception in the workplace. Specifically, 51.28% of subordinates reported deceiving their supervisors, and 37.11% of supervisors reported deceiving their subordinates. It is important to note that because the current study was interested in power and deception in the subordinate-supervisor relationship, the study did not ask respondents to report deception among their peer groups (e.g., managers deceiving other managers). Although these data appear to indicate that subordinates are more likely to deceive their supervisors than managers deceiving their subordinates, a chi-square test indicated the difference was not statistically significant,  $\chi^2(df=1, N=214) = 3.81, p = .051$ . Each of the research questions, unless otherwise noted, was answered by examining the data of only those supervisors and subordinates who reported an incident in which they used deception in the workplace.

Of those participants who reported using deception, the two most common settings for the deception were face-to-face conversations (including group meetings; 77.80% for supervisors, 54.20% for subordinates) and phone conversations (including leaving a voicemail; 8.30% for supervisors, 33.90% for subordinates). Other settings identified only by subordinates included email, text messaging, and written notes; only supervisors reported using loudspeaker announcements. Both groups had participants who reported more than one of these methods (8.30% of supervisors, 5.10% of subordinates). The settings in which the reported deception occurred differed significantly between supervisors and supervisors  $\chi^2(df=9, N=94) = 23.03, p = .006$ .

Supervisors and subordinates were asked how their lies were detected. First, respondents were asked, "Did your subordinate(s) [supervisor(s)] ever find out that you lied?" Of the 96 participants who reported using deception, only 8 (or 8.33%) reported that the deception was discovered. Given that so few lies were uncovered (to the knowledge of the participants), the subsequent results should be viewed with caution.

The eight participants who reported that their deception had been discovered were asked, "When did your subordinate [supervisor] find out that you lied? (In other words, how long did it take for your subordinate [supervisor] to find out that you lied?). A total of five supervisors reported that their deception was discovered by their subordinates. Three supervisors reported that deception was discovered within 24 hours (but not immediately), one reported that it was discovered within a week, and one supervisor reported it was discovered a while afterwards, but did not specify a timeframe. A total of three subordinates reported that their deception was detected. One subordinate indicated that the deception was discovered within 24 hours (not immediately following the lie), and the other two subordinates did not specify a time frame.

These eight participants were asked, "How did your subordinate(s) [supervisor(s)] find out that you lied?" Three supervisors reported that they confessed to the lie, one supervisor said the

subordinates uncovered evidence of the lie, and one supervisor indicated he/she was caught “red handed” by the subordinates (i.e., the manager took a valet tip and pocketed it rather than sharing with other valets, and the employees saw it and confronted the manager about the tip money). Only one subordinate provided an answer to this question. He/she indicated that the supervisor found evidence of the lie.

## Research Questions

The first research question asked about differences between supervisors’ and subordinates’ perceptions on a variety of outcomes in their manager-subordinate relationships. On the perceived power difference, results indicated that supervisors perceived themselves to have significantly more power in the manager-subordinate relationship than subordinates perceived themselves to have,  $t(205) = 22.61, p < .001, r = .85$ . For those participants who reported using deception, results showed that supervisors and subordinates did not differ with regard to how risky they perceived the deception to be,  $t(91) = -.27, p = .79, r = -.03$ . The means for these and other variables comparing superiors and subordinates can be found in Table 1.

	Subordinates			Superiors		
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Power	115	2.66	.89	92	5.36	.80
Lie Risk	57	3.83	1.46	36	3.74	1.56
Generalized Willingness to Lie	117	2.41	1.52	97	2.07	1.41
Acceptability of Being Lied To	117	1.77	1.18	97	1.43	.88
Willingness to Lie <i>When Necessary</i>	117	3.63	1.93	97	3.26	1.92
Self Ability to Lie <i>in General</i>	116	3.90	1.83	96	3.20	1.88
Self Ability to Lie <i>to Superior/ Subordinate</i>	113	3.47	1.73	97	3.03	1.81
Superior/ Subordinate Ability to Lie <i>in General</i>	114	3.63	1.58	96	3.09	1.36
Superior/ Subordinate Ability to Lie <i>to Me</i>	114	3.20	1.59	96	2.78	1.30

In terms of willingness to tell a lie, we assessed participants’ willingness to lie *in general*, and their willingness to lie *when necessary*. Results indicated that supervisors and subordinates did not differ in their willingness to use deception in general,  $t(212) = -1.66, p = .10, r = -.11$ . Similarly, supervisors and subordinates did not differ in their willingness to use deception when they deemed it necessary,  $t(212) = -1.43, p = .16, r = -.10$ . An independent samples *t*-test indicated that all participants’ willingness to lie out of necessity ( $M = 3.46, SD = 1.93$ ) was significantly greater than

their willingness to lie in general ( $M = 2.26$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ),  $t(213) = -13.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $r = -0.69$ . It is important to note here, however, that respondents' mean willingness to use deception is below the midpoint of the scale regardless of the perceived necessity of the lie.

The participants' ability to tell a lie was assessed four ways. First, results indicated that supervisors perceived their own ability to lie *in general* was lower than subordinates' perceived ability,  $t(210) = -2.73$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $r = -.19$ . Second, the data showed that supervisors perceived their own ability to lie *to their subordinates* did not differ significantly from subordinates' perceived ability to lie *to their supervisors*,  $t(208) = -1.83$ ,  $p = .07$ ,  $r = -.13$ . Third, results indicated that supervisors perceived their subordinates to be less able to lie *in general* than subordinates' perceived their supervisors' ability to lie *in general*,  $t(208) = -2.63$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $r = -.18$ . Finally, the data showed that supervisors perceived their subordinates to be less able to lie *to them* than subordinates' perceived their supervisors' ability to lie *in general*,  $t(208) = -2.07$ ,  $p = .04$ ,  $r = -.14$  (see Means in Table 1). Also, an independent samples *t*-test indicated that participants' perceived ability to lie to their supervisors/subordinates did not differ significantly from their perceptions of their supervisors'/subordinates' ability to lie to them  $t(208) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $r = 0.12$ . As with participants' willingness to lie, their perceived ability to lie was below the midpoint of the scale.

Finally, we examined whether differences existed between all supervisors' and subordinates' perceived acceptability of lies. Results indicated that supervisors believed it was less acceptable to be lied to by their subordinates than subordinates being lied to by their managers  $t(212) = -2.32$ ,  $p = .02$ ,  $r = -.16$ ; however, the means for both groups neared a floor effect. This indicated that both supervisors and subordinates believed that being deceived in the workplace was unacceptable.

The second research question asked to what degree one's perceptions of power in the manager-subordinate relationship were related to one's willingness to use deception, perceived ability to lie, the acceptability of being lied to, and perceptions of risk associated with the lie. Results indicated that the power people perceived themselves to have was not related to how willing they were to lie *in general* ( $r = -.06$ ,  $p = .36$ ), how willing they were to lie *when necessary* ( $r = -.05$ ,  $p = .47$ ), their perceived ability to lie to their subordinate/supervisor ( $r = -.07$ ,  $p = .31$ ), or how risky they perceived the lie ( $r = -.08$ ,  $p = .44$ ). On the other hand, as one's perceptions of power increased, their perceptions of their supervisors'/subordinates' ability to lie *in general* ( $r = -.19$ ,  $p = .005$ ) and lie *to them* ( $r = -.17$ ,  $p = .014$ ) decreased, and the less acceptable they thought it was to be lied to by their supervisor/subordinate ( $r = -.16$ ,  $p = .02$ ).

The third research question asked if differences existed between supervisors and subordinates with regard to the circumstances under which they would use deception. All participants were asked to "please explain under what circumstances you are willing to deceive the people you supervise" (or "your supervisor"). It is important to note that 67.80% of all supervisors and 62.10% of all subordinates did not provide an answer to this question. Of those who did answer the question, managers' most common response was an unwillingness to lie under any circumstances (17.40%), 15.90% cited the necessity of omitting information (e.g., for confidentiality purposes; to deny how

much they know about a work situation, such as why somebody quit), 13.00% reported job performance reasons (e.g., to ensure tasks get completed, to change employee behavior), 11.60% reported information control (e.g., for security reasons), 5.80% said they were willing to use deception to protect others, 5.80% cited the company's best interest/success, and 15.90% reported two or more reasons. The remaining managers reported myriad circumstances such as avoiding personal questions, to save face, and to protect their own self interest (e.g., to make personal gains at work).

Subordinates' most common response was a willingness to use deception to get time off (19.80%), 13.60% said they were not willing to use deception under any circumstance, 11.10% cited protecting others, 9.90% would lie to protect their own interest, 8.60% to avoid personal questions, 7.40% to impact work product (e.g., buy more time on a task, avoid work duties), 6.20% to stay out of trouble, and 8.60% reported two or more reasons. The remaining subordinates indicated they would be willing to use deception for other reasons such as saving face, if they had negative perceptions of their boss (e.g., did not respect the boss, the supervisor lied to them previously), and if they perceived a work policy or decision to be unreasonable. These data indicate that respondents varied with regard to the circumstances under which they would be willing to deceive their supervisors/subordinates,  $\chi^2 (N = 149, df = 17) = 68.94, p < .001$ .

With regard to the topics for which they reported using deception, those participants who reported using deception were asked, "Now please tell us what you lied about. Please be as specific as possible." Supervisors reported many, varied topics. The most common were 9.70% who lied about knowing specific information (e.g., denying knowledge such as downsizing or why an employee was fired), 9.70% lied about employee performance (e.g., telling an employee that an evaluation rating was based on needing more education rather than saying honestly that it was due to overall job performance), 9.70% lied about the reasons for following a required procedure (e.g., why an employee was required to go to a different location), 9.70% lied about employee schedules (e.g., when an employee was scheduled to work next), 6.50% lied about the urgency/amount of work that needed to be done (e.g., falsely claiming work as urgent to ensure the task is completed by a deadline), 6.50% lied about the status of paychecks, 6.50% lied about meeting with higher authorities about employees concerns (e.g., the supervisor told subordinates that their desires/needs were brought to the supervisor's boss to resolve subordinates' concerns), 6.50% lied about the status of work (e.g., claiming tasks were completed that were not), and 6.50% lied about their personal relationships (e.g., denying they were actually dating someone at work, denying they were going through a divorce). The remaining managers reported myriad topics such as keeping money, the urgency of tasks, and withholding information about spying on their subordinates.

Subordinates, on the other hand, reported few topics. The most common topic was getting time off (55.60%; exactly half of these were subordinates who called in sick when they were not), 22.20% lied about the status and quality of work (e.g., claiming that projects were advanced farther than actuality), 11.10% lied about promptness (e.g., why they were late for work), 7.40% denied



knowledge of an event (e.g., avoided revealing information that would get themselves or others in trouble, such as eating in the backroom when it was forbidden), and 3.70% used deception to mask their true emotion (e.g., pretending to be happy in their position, pretending to like the boss or a coworker). These data indicated that supervisors and subordinates differed significantly with regard to the topics about which they reported lying,  $\chi^2(N = 85, df = 19) = 58.95, p < .001$ .

The fourth research question asked about the messages supervisors and subordinates used to make their deceptive messages effective. This question was answered by focusing on three different questions. First, participants were asked, "What did you say to make your supervisor(s) [subordinate(s)] think you were telling the truth? In other words, how did you create the message to be certain your boss [subordinate] would believe you?" Supervisors most commonly reported using their credibility (17.10%, e.g., claiming their authority/credibility spoke for them and nothing else was required), 17.10% tried to relate to their subordinates (e.g., coming across as an equal to the subordinate, downplaying the power difference), 16.20% reported using nonverbals (instead of reporting what they actually said, e.g., they made sure they "acted the part" or used direct eye contact), 14.30% used their authority to make threats, and 8.60% lied by omission (e.g., told the truth but omitted pieces to lead subordinates to a false conclusion). The remaining supervisors reported using other messages such as falsely referencing documents/evidence, creating a false sense of urgency, and using vague language. Subordinates most commonly reported relying on nonverbals rather than reporting what they actually said (31.60%), 22.20% reported that they made up a whole story around the lie, 14.80% added details and embellished the lie, whereas 7.40% reported avoiding details and making the lie short. Subordinates reported saying various other messages such as ensuring consistency, referencing physical evidence, and using a partial truth. These data indicate that supervisors and subordinates differ significantly with regard to what they say, or how they create their deceptive messages,  $\chi^2(N = 88, df = 15) = 50.86, p < .001$ .

Second, respondents were asked, "Other than what you actually said, did you do anything else to make yourself appear truthful?" Supervisors most commonly reported "no," indicating they did not do anything else (55.90%), 14.70% used nonverbals (e.g., using direct eye contact and "showing emotions"), and 8.80% reported they were unsure if they had done anything else. Managers reported additional ways they made themselves appear truthful such as being backed by other supervisors, using persistency/repetition, and staying positive. Subordinates most commonly reported "no," indicating that they did not do anything else (36.00%) and 32.00% reported relying on nonverbals (e.g., using direct eye contact). The remaining subordinates noted they made themselves appear truthful using strategies such as relying on and playing up their own credibility, changing the subject quickly, and preparing for the lie in advance. Chi-square analysis indicated that supervisors and subordinates differed significantly as to what other strategies they used to ensure they appeared truthful,  $\chi^2(N = 83, df = 15) = 29.83, p = .013$ .

Third, participants were asked, "What do you think was the most persuasive part of your lie? In other words, what part of your lie do you think was most influential in making your subordinate

[supervisor] think you were telling the truth?” The most common response from supervisors was the simple “believability” of the lie (28.10%), 18.80% cited their own leverage/power as an authority, 12.50% indicated their ability to remove the power distance and act as a friend rather than a boss, 12.50% cited their credibility (deception was uncharacteristic of them), and 6.20% indicated their nonverbals were the most persuasive part of the deception (e.g., their tone of voice, eye contact). Supervisors reported other reasons such as their lies being rational, using documentation, and being consistent. On the other hand, subordinates indicated that their nonverbals were the most persuasive part of their deception (23.10%, e.g., tone, eye contact, “playing the part”), 15.40% cited the actual content they used (e.g., relying on medical or school excuses), 13.50% reported their use of emotion (e.g., making emotional appeals based on family), and 13.50% cited their own credibility. Subordinates reported other reasons, as well, such as the lie being simple (e.g., short, not complicated), the use of physical evidence to support the lie, and calling (to lie) when the supervisor would be busy and unable to answer the phone. These data indicates that significant differences were present with regard to what supervisors and subordinates believed was the most persuasive part of their deception,  $\chi^2(N = 83, df = 17) = 55.91, p < .001$ .

The fifth research questions asked what served as the motivation for the specific deception used by supervisors or subordinates in the workplace. Specifically, participants were asked, “Please explain where you came up with the idea for the lie. In other words, please tell us what gave you the idea to use the specific lie you employed.” Managers reported that they “just came up with it” (16.10%), 16.10% used a standard procedure or company norm, 16.10% based their deception on a previous experience (e.g., saw someone else use the same deception successfully), 9.70% reported it was a “logical” lie, and 9.70% reported it was an “easy way out.” Supervisors provided other ideas for the deception such as its simplicity or being told by their own supervisors to use the specific deception. Subordinates reported that they used their work situation (e.g., disliking the boss, not caring about the job) as motivation for the lie (18.50%), 16.70% said they simply “came up with” the idea, 14.80% reported their lie was a commonly employed excuse (e.g., calling sick when one wants time off for other reasons), 14.80% reported it was “the easy way out” to avoid conflict, 7.40% based their lie on an actual truth (e.g., using a partial truth and lying by omission), and 7.40% relied on a coworker or other third party to help devise the lie. The data reported here indicated that supervisors and subordinates differed significantly with regard to how they “came up” with the idea for their deceptive message,  $\chi^2(N = 84, df = 18) = 46.86, p < .001$ .

## DISCUSSION

### Perceptions of Power and Deception

Power is an important situational and relational variable in the workplace and has important implications for the study of deception in this context. Dunbar’s (2004) dyadic power theory

suggests that power is derived both from differences in the access to resources and the legitimate authority to use those resources. In the workplace, supervisors have an advantage in both areas, which impacted the substantial perceived differences (effect size = 0.85) in power between supervisors and subordinates in the current study. These perceived power differences translated into differences in their use of deceptive messages, as well. Whereas supervisors reported using their power to create their deceptive messages and make their lies more believable (using their own leverage/power as an authority, removing the power distance by acting as a friend rather than a boss, or relying on their own credibility), subordinates did not have access to those resources and thus relied most heavily on their ability to manipulate their own nonverbal behavior, emotional displays, and story telling.

Interestingly, managers relied on the very latent resources (e.g., credibility) that DePaulo et al. (1991) and Schweitzer et al. (2006) argued are risky for people in a powerful position to use. If deception is dangerous for supervisors because they are gambling with their future credibility, and trust harmed by deception never recovers fully, managers are taking a large risk by leveraging their credibility and authority to engage in deception with their subordinates. Subordinates who use deception might be placing themselves in a dangerous situation, as well, if the lie is detected (e.g., being fired, demoted, punished). Results related to perceptions of the risk associated with the deception were therefore surprising. Managers and subordinates did not differ with regard to how risky their deception was, and their perceptions of risk were lukewarm at best. This might be due to respondents' choices to report less-risky deception, or the fact that perhaps people engage in deception primarily when they perceive the risks are low (e.g., to avoid the consequences noted above). Also, this result might reflect that most respondents "got away" with their deception and therefore hindsight tells them there was little risk involved with the particular lie they reported in this study.

In addition to perceptions of risk, supervisors and subordinates were similar in other areas. They exhibited no differences with regard to their (un)willingness to use deception in the workplace *in general* and *when necessary* and both supervisors and subordinates indicated a reluctance to engage in deception in the workplace under any circumstance. This finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating a general unwillingness to deceive in the workplace (e.g., Aquino & Becker, 2005). Given that managers' and subordinates' willingness to lie was low overall, it was not surprising to note that all respondents reported a greater willingness to lie out of necessity than in general. Also, supervisors and subordinates reported similarly low abilities to deceive each other in the workplace, and findings indicated that all participants' perceived ability to lie to their supervisors/subordinates did not differ significantly from their perceptions of their supervisors'/subordinates' ability to lie to them.

Despite the similarities among managers and subordinates, a number of differences existed. Dunbar (2004) predicts that power-unequal dyads will demonstrate less overt dominance than power-equal dyads but the theory does not make specific predictions about the types of strategies

that power-unequal dyads will use in place of overt dominance. Our results revealed that subordinates believed it was more acceptable to be lied to by their managers (compared to how acceptable managers found it to be lied to by their subordinates) suggesting that the power difference likely played a role – it is less acceptable for a less powerful person to lie to us, compared to a more powerful person deceiving us. It is important to note here, however, that the acceptability of deception was very low overall. Also, although subordinates had greater perceptions of their own ability to lie in general when compared to managers' own perceived ability to lie in general, subordinates perceived that their supervisors were better able to lie, both in general and to them specifically (compared to supervisors' perceptions of subordinates' ability to lie).

One's perceived power in the managerial-subordinate relationship was related negatively to their perceptions of their supervisors'/subordinates' ability to lie to them, to lie in general, and the acceptability of being lied to by their supervisor/subordinate. Therefore, more powerful people believe it is less acceptable to be lied to, and believe subordinates to have a lesser ability to use deception and get away with it. This is consistent with other findings by Dunbar and her colleagues (Dunbar & Abra, 2008; Dunbar, Bippus & Young, 2008) suggesting that although power-unequal dyads display less overall dominance than their power-equal counterparts, the subtle dominance displays by those in power “leak” out to their subordinates and reaffirm their powerful position.

### **Deception Reported in the Workplace**

Perhaps of most interest were the findings that surfaced with regard to the actual deception reported by managers and subordinates. First, subordinates lied about very few topics. The vast majority of subordinates lied either to get time off of work (or to explain being late to work) or to impact their managers' perceptions of the status/quality of their work (e.g., to buy more time to complete tasks). Also, many of the lies centered on managing supervisors' impressions, consistent with previous research (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1996; Deluga, 1991). Supervisors, on the other hand, lied to subordinates about a wide range of topics from the relatively innocuous (e.g., overestimating the urgency of a task) to the more odious (e.g., spying on subordinates). This range might again reflect the power differential between supervisors and subordinates in that supervisors have legitimate authority over a wider range of workplace topics.

The messages supervisors and subordinates created differed with regard to what they said, how they attempted to appear truthful, and what they perceived was the most believable part of the lie. As noted previously, managers relied heavily on their credibility and authority; however, just as many supervisors tried to downplay their legitimate power role to create their messages and make themselves appear more believable. Thus, the very fact that managers had more power in the relationship allowed them to use it as communicative ploy—decreasing the power distance proved important for supervisors. Subordinates most often relied on controlling nonverbal behaviors, or focused heavily on the “stories” surrounding the deception. Although some reported keeping the

stories short by avoiding details, more often subordinates reported embellishing the stories with added details to improve the believability of the lie. The reported focus on the structure of the story was interesting given that (a) embellishment increases the information the deceiver must remember to maintain consistency in future interactions, and (b) previous research indicated that deceptive messages tend to be less plausible and more internally discrepant (DePaulo et al., 2003). The differences uncovered in the current study indicated that powerful people relied on the very nature of the qualities/resources inherent in their position (e.g., credibility and authority) for successful deception, whereas less powerful people relied more often on manipulating their appearance through nonverbal behaviors and story crafting.

Finally, despite the extremely low number of discovered lies in the current investigation, the findings warrant a brief mention here because they emphasize the fact that detecting deception in the “heat of the moment” is not the typical way deception is uncovered (Park et al., 2002). No lies were uncovered through the interpretation of nonverbal cues, rather they were discovered after the fact through evidence or confessions. Therefore, despite the importance placed in the research literature on detecting deception in real time by observing nonverbal cues (e.g., Cody & O’Hair, 1983), both supervisors and subordinates seemed to detect deception using other information.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Only 96 people (fewer than half of all participants) reported using deception in the workplace. Although this is consistent with findings that a few prolific liars are responsible for the majority of lies (Serota, Levine, & Boster, 2010) and is consistent with samples sizes of other deception work (e.g. Enis, Vrij, & Chance, 2008), it was somewhat surprising to find so few participants who would admit to lying. One possibility is that despite the anonymity of the survey, participants’ social desirability bias or fear that their employers would discover their deception meant that they were reluctant to report that they had been deceptive at work. This was evidenced by the fact that several potential research subjects refused to participate once they heard they would be required to describe their own deceptiveness and some organizations refused the researchers access to their employees once they heard the study was about deception in the workplace. The authors went to great lengths to assure the respondents that their survey could not be connected to them or their organization in any way, but future researchers should be aware of participants’ reluctance and guard against self-selection bias. Also, it might be that the wording used to ask participants to describe a “lie” was interpreted narrowly by respondents to mean “fabrication” and were more likely to respond about outright lies rather than omissions or vagueness that could be construed as deception if a more inclusive term was used. Perhaps examples of deception could be provided so that respondents would know exactly what researchers are looking for. However, if it is true that fewer than half of the participants had actually engaged in deception at work, then it may be that so few have used deception because they view it as highly unethical, as evidenced by (a)

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many participants' unwillingness to use deception under any circumstances and (b) findings in previous research arguing that workplace deception is generally seen as unethical (e.g., Aquino & Becker, 2005). Also, this finding might be due to the power difference inherent in the types of lies examined in this study. Specifically, fewer lies might happen between managers and subordinates than between equal-status co-workers given that both parties have a great deal to lose (e.g., DePaulo et al., 1991; Schweitzer et al., 2006) if the deception is detected. Perhaps the supervisors in this study fear not only the loss of credibility with their employees but the repercussions from their own supervisors, as well. Also, if previous research is accurate that deception is used frequently in the workplace (e.g., Robinson et al., 1998; Strout, 2002), it might be that deception is used more frequently in relationships with a more equal balance of power. Regardless of the reason for the low number of deceivers in this investigation, future studies should seek to increase the number of deceptive interactions included for examination.

It also is important to note that participants likely chose to discuss deception events in which they were successful, or where the lie had not yet been detected given that Park et al. (2002) reported that deception is often uncovered long after it takes place. Although participants were asked to report a *recent* deception event, increasing the chance that the lie had not been uncovered, the current findings might be inaccurate with regard to the larger picture of deception in the workplace if only successful lies were reported. Also, it is possible that more participants' lies were uncovered but they were not aware of the discovery. For example, the subordinates might be unlikely to confront supervisors with a discovered lie given the reported perceived power differential. Therefore, the results might be biased such that the reported deception was overwhelmingly successful (possibly painting a lopsided portrait of workplace deception) and overwhelmingly undetected.

A final limitation is the fact that the current study relied solely on the participants' recollections of deception, not actual deception as it might occur. This investigation sought to examine how perceptions of power influence the perceptions of deception use and strategies used by deceivers, but these recollections might be tainted by subsequent events, lapses in memory, or even fundamental attribution error. Also, the participants might be unaware of their nonverbal cues that the receivers observed and were able to report only on what they intentionally manipulated rather than what they unintentionally "leaked." The advantages of this method are that it yields insight into the mind of the deceiver and allows us to know when deception has been detected, perhaps weeks later. Despite these advantages, future research should look at actual interactions, whether in the laboratory or the field, so that the nonverbal cues, behaviors of both the deceiver and receiver, and message construction can be examined more closely.

## CONCLUSION

Although deception in the workplace might be perceived as unethical (Aquino & Becker, 2005), if the workplace is like the other areas of our lives, it is pervasive. Regardless of its ubiquity

at work, deception can carry serious consequences for supervisors and subordinates alike, especially given the power-laden relationships in which they operate. To that end, the current study was the first step in exploring how deception occurs in the workplace, and the role of perceived power in the deception process. Just as power is an important situational and relational variable in the workplace, it had key implications for how deception is experienced in the workplace. It is our hope that this work can be used to develop theoretical models to more closely examine the intersection of deception and power not only in the workplace but in many other contexts as well.

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