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Deceptive Affection in Romantic Relationships

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Deceptive Affection in Romantic Relationships

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Abstract

Feeling affection is a key component of romantic relationships, and affectionate communication is associated with a myriad of positive relational benefits; but what happens when that communication is not an honest reflection of an individual's true feelings, but instead is used deceptively? The purpose of this study, therefore, was to explore the relationship between frequency of deceptive affection and: an individuals' beliefs about deception, frequency of deception, and the relational qualities of commitment and satisfaction. Results indicated no relationship exists between the frequency of deceptive affectionate message (DAM) use and an individual's beliefs about deception, though, a negative relationship was found between general partner deception and all four of the beliefs about deception studied. Additionally, results indicated that frequency of DAM use was unrelated to commitment and satisfaction, but that general deception was negatively related to these two relational qualities. Additional findings, limitations and future research are discussed.

Keywords: Affection Exchange Theory; Deceptive Affectionate Messages; Deception; Affection; Commitment and Satisfaction.

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Chapter One

Introduction and Review of Research

Feeling affection is a key component of romantic relationships, and affectionate

communication is associated with a myriad of positive relational benefits, including higher

reports of commitment (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010), satisfaction (Floyd, 2002; Horan &

Booth-Butterfield), happiness, self esteem, and affection received from others (Floyd, 2002).

While affection has been studied in various ways, the introduction of Affection Exchange Theory

(AET; Floyd, 2001) has provided a more precise understanding of affection and its role in

interpersonal interactions. As a result, the majority of recent work examining affectionate

communication has been rooted in AET. The theory adopts an evolutionary standpoint, and in its

five theoretical postulates (and various sub-postulates), contends that affectionate

communication supports long-term survival. Affection Exchange Theory argues that those

individuals who are more affectionate communicators will have increased opportunities for

reproduction. Additionally, the theory contends that affectionate communicators will raise

children who are also affectionate, which will result in procreation and in turn, survival of the

parents' genes, as they continue to be passed down.

As previously described, AET argues that affectionate communication enhances relational

bonds. Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2010) tested this idea by studying the relationships among

affectionate communication and relational investment (e.g., satisfaction, commitment, quality of

alternatives, and investment size). They found that both giving and receiving affectionate

messages were positively related to commitment and satisfaction within romantic relationships.

This supports AET's arguments as commitment and satisfaction represent close pair bonds,

specifically proposed in postulate 3a of AET (Floyd, 2001; Horan & Booth-Butterfield).

Later, Horan (in press) adopted this argument to explore perceptions of relational transgressions, which is a behavior from one's significant other that is viewed as a violation of the rules of the relationship (Metts & Cupach, 2007). Rooted in AET, he proposed that affectionate communication may benefit perceptions of transgressions. He found that the amount of affection an individual received from their romantic partner was negatively related to feeling hurt, ruminating, and perceptions of transgression severity. This suggests that relationships in which individuals receive higher levels of affectionate communication from their partners, transgressions are seen as less severe, thus positively benefiting the relational environment (Horan). This once again supports AET, and further highlights the importance of affectionate messages in romantic relationships.

Further, Goodboy, Horan, and Booth-Butterfield (in press) added additional support for the idea that affectionate messages are beneficial in relationships. They found that the amount of affection received from partners was correlated negatively to the use of jealousy evoking behaviors. They suggested that, potentially, lower levels of affection would increase jealousy evoking behaviors. Because of the various positive relational benefits associated with higher levels of affectionate communication in a relationship, it is possible that jealousy evoking behaviors simply are not needed. In other words, perhaps the positive relational benefits create a more positive relational environment in which less jealous evoking behaviors are used. Additionally, when individuals are "relationally satisfied and affectionately satiated" they are unlikely to be motivated to evoke jealousy by factors such as mate retention, a suggested reason for jealousy evocation (Goodboy et al., p. TBD). That is, they argue it is likely that satisfied couples would not have the motivation for evoking jealousy. Collectively, the aforementioned

studies offer a few specific examples of the benefits associated with affectionate communication in romantic relationships.

Purpose of Study

Whereas AET's argument that affectionate communication benefits individuals and is a valuable resource in relationships has gathered support (e.g., Floyd, 2006), AET researches have frequently described "risky" aspects of affectionate communication, speculating it can have outcomes that are less than ideal (e.g., Floyd, 2006; Horan, in press; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010, 2011, in press). The research reviewed indicates that affectionate messages are an important aspect of any romantic relationship; but what happens when that communication is not an honest reflection of an individual's true feelings, but instead are used deceptively?

Prior studies have shown that deceptive communication is commonplace in nearly all aspects of everyday life (e.g., DePaulo, Kashy, Kirkendol, Wyer & Epstein, 1996), yet individuals generally tend to believe that their romantic partners will be honest with them (McCornack & Parks, 1986). This idea of a *truth bias* argues that the closer individuals become to their romantic partners, the worse they become at detecting deception from that partner, and the less lies they estimate their partners telling them (McCornack & Parks). Horan and Booth-Butterfield (in press) found support for this notion of a truth bias. That is, participants were asked to report, in interaction diaries, about the frequency of their deceptive communication compared to other individuals their age in romantic relationships. Their results revealed that 17.5% responded that they lie *as much as they do*; 71.9% responded as *less than they do*; 1.8% responded as *more than they do*; and 8.8% responded as *undecided*. Further complicating matters, Cole (2001) explained that, in general, individuals report that they engage in more deceptive communication than they estimate is used by their partners. This phenomenon could be

related to the belief that for an individual, even "entertaining the idea" that their partner may be deceiving them is considered "relationally prohibitive" (p. 125). Clearly, the majority of respondents in the Horan and Booth-Butterfield's study felt that they lie less than others, which is related to ideas of social desirability. This is likely related to the idea that these individuals would generally assume their partners would tell less lies than themselves, supporting the notion of a truth bias.

Affection Exchange Theory asserts, in postulate two, that "Affectionate feelings and affectionate messages are distinct messages that often, but need not, covary" (Floyd 2006). Postulate two additionally suggests that that individuals can modify affectionate messages through "display rules" (Ekman & Friesen, 1975). Floyd (2006) explains that while individuals can and do express genuine emotions with no regard for these rules, they also can modify the expression of their emotions in at least five distinct ways. Individuals can i*nhibit, simulate, intensify, deintensify* or *mask* their emotional expressions (Floyd; Ekman & Friesen). Floyd, pointing to several studies exploring displays rules and affectionate expression, argues that expression of affectionate messages can be modified in all of the above-mentioned ways. Floyd suggests that affectionate communication can "...be used strategically to serve ulterior motives..." (p. 164). As is clear, postulate two of AET raises a number of important questions when considering affectionate communication and the authenticity of such messages.

It may seem odd that individuals would use affection to deceive their partners; however, research suggests that they, in fact, do. In reality, affection related deception has been argued to be a common potential risk for communicators (e.g., Floyd, 2006; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010, 2011, in press). Supporting this claim, DePaulo et al. (1996) found that individuals lie about their feelings in romantic relationships and DePaulo and Kashy (1998) found, in their diary

research, that individuals used some sort of deceptive communication in one third of the interactions with their non-married romantic partners. Additionally, feelings were the most common area of deception in communication within romantic relationships. DePaulo et al. further determined that individuals were more likely to tell self-centered lies, as opposed to other-oriented lies. This research suggests that individuals use deceptive communication quite regularly in romantic relationships and that the individuals' feelings are often the subject of those lies, which raises interesting questions when thinking about deceptive affection.

Building off of the DePaulo studies (DePaulo et al., 1996; DePaulo & Kashy, 1998), Horan and Booth-Butterfield (in press) specifically explored deceptive affectionate messages (DAMs; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011). They proposed that deceptive affection can occur in two ways, either when genuinely-felt feelings of affection are withheld or through the use of deceptive affectionate messages. Deceptive affectionate messages are considered to be "overt expressions of affection that are not consistent with sources' internal feelings" (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011, p. 79).

Offering a more complete understanding of how and why deceptive affection occurs, Horan and Booth-Butterfield (in press) replicated the diary methods used by DePaulo and associates (DePaulo et al., 1996; DePaulo & Kashy, 1998) in their deception research. Horan and Booth-Butterfield's study found that participants reported lying about their own feelings, feelings about their partners and feelings about the situation. Additionally, most of the feelings reported were negative, suggesting that DAMs may be a sign of temporary dissatisfaction or some other negative response. Motives for the use of DAMs may include face-saving, conflict management/avoidance, and emotion management. The results of this diary study also found that on average, participants communicate 3.30 DAMs during the course of a week. This finding is of

particular interest to the current study as frequency of deceptive affection had not been measured previously.

Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2011) systematically studied potential risks associated with DAMs. They argued that DAMs are quite normative in romantic relationships as all participants in their study were able to recall a recent DAM they expressed to their romantic partner. Despite the proposed risks associated with deceptive affection, recalling these interactions did not increase blood pressure, heart rate, nor did they appear to be related to feelings of guilt and shame (Horan & Booth-Butterfield).

Thus far the emerging research exploring deceptive affection has provided a descriptive understanding of this process (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, in press) and shown that it minimally activates deceivers (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011). This thesis extends existing work by examining factors that may relate to the frequency of DAMs. Specifically, beliefs about deception are explored along with relational qualities. Although specific rationales will be proposed after research is reviewed, these factors were selected given their prior relationships to deceptive and affectionate communicative processes (e.g., Floyd, 2002, 2006; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010, 2011; Horan & Dillow, 2009).

Beliefs about Deception

Research shows that individuals hold various beliefs about deceptive communication in relationships. Striving to gain a better understanding of deceptive communication in the context of romantic relationships, Cole (2001) examined three possible (interrelated) explanations for the use of deceptive communication in these relationships: *reciprocity, avoiding punishment,* and *intimacy needs*. Support was found for all three of these explanations concerning the use of deception. Cole further argued that the results of his study suggest that "the truth appears to be

costly for a variety of relationally and individually based reasons" which may motivate deception (p. 124). Ways in which telling the truth can be costly in a relationship include when it is not given in return, when the partner reacts to it in a negative manner or when individuals are afraid that their relational needs will not be met through the use of honesty. Cole found that, though use of deception is related to negative outcomes for the individual, as long as it is not discovered, deception use has a slightly positive impact on the partner being deceived. Interestingly, individuals tend to assume that their partners use honest communication more often then themselves, as individuals are generally only "partially aware of their partner's deceptive practices", related to the previously mentioned idea of a truth bias (p. 125). That said, Cole explains that when an individual does believe their partner engaged in deception, the outcome is negative for *both* parties, and further argues that perhaps when one believes their partner is lying, s/he may reciprocate that deception, leading to more negative relational outcomes. This study points to the key idea that, at times, telling the truth can be viewed as costly in intimate relationships, and as such, individuals are occasionally motivated to avoid honest communication in order to maintain harmony in the relationship. This is important to consider in relationship to the beliefs about deception one holds, as these beliefs may play a role in whether or not an individual will lie in order to maintain this harmonious environment.

Boon and McLeod (2001) studied both the extent to which individuals believe they are successful in deceiving their romantic partners and the extent to which they believe their partners are successful at deceiving them. They found that people, in general, believe they are better at deceiving their partners than their partners are at deceiving them, reporting that they feel they are successful at deceiving their romantic partner a little more than half of the time. They further found that individuals reported generally believing they are successful in their efforts to deceive

their romantic partners. Boon and McLeod discovered that the beliefs individuals hold about the importance of honesty in a romantic relationship, and their beliefs about their partners and their own use of deception predicts the use of certain types of deception. For example, participants were less likely to use jokes and sarcasm to deceive when they believed they were less likely to be successful at deceiving and the more strongly they believed honesty is important in a relationship. Also, the more strongly individuals endorsed the idea that complete honesty is important, the less likely they reported they were to use out-right falsification as a means of deception. Additionally, they found that the beliefs one holds predicted an individual's response to both suspicion of their partners dishonesty and reactions to their own honesty being questioned. This research demonstrates how the beliefs an individual holds about deception can influence the ways in which they use deceptive practices within romantic relationships.

Boon and McLeod (2001) found support for this idea when they studied individuals' views about dishonest communication in romantic relationships. They found that respondents claimed that complete honesty was important in a relationship. Interestingly though, the majority also responded that *it depends on the situation* when asked if the success of a relationship was dependent on complete honesty. Also, the majority of participants replied "yes" when asked if an individual should ever mislead his or her romantic partner. Boon and McLeod theorized that this apparent inconsistency between the importance of honesty and acceptability of dishonesty may be due to the fact that the respondents' feelings on the importance of honesty indicate the importance of "preserving the integrity their relationships" and as such, they would use dishonesty in a situation in which the truth could harm the relationship (p. 473). The reasons for deceptive communication being accepted support this idea and included *protecting the partners' feelings, preventing damage to the relationship* and *increasing or avoiding damage to the*

partners' self esteem (p. 469). Interestingly, they also found that the more strongly respondents felt about the importance of honesty in a relationship, the less likely they were to use out-right falsification as a means of deception.

Levine, Asada, and Lindsey (2003) suggested that the type of deception used may have an impact on whether or not it is considered deceptive. They argue that both the severity of the possible consequences of being dishonest and the type of information that is the subject of the deception affect the perceived deceptiveness. They discovered that falsifying information was almost always considered deception but that omitting information was only sometimes considered deceptive. It was seen as deceptive when the omitted information concerned topics rated as severe. This shows that, in addition to differing views on the acceptability of deception and its use, beliefs vary on what constitutes deception.

Scholl and O'Hair (2005) aimed to explore the beliefs held by individuals that play a possible role in their use of and views about deception and strove to begin compiling a core set of beliefs concerning deception. The authors argued that "understanding why people engage in deception is partially dependent on their deception related beliefs" (p. 377). Scholl and O'Hair found, in a four phase study, four core concepts describe beliefs about deception: *Deception is wrong* refers to the extent to which an individual feels that deception is unethical or unacceptable; *Intentionality* represents the extent to which one "lacks a sense of self-awareness and personal agency" when using deceptive communication (p. 393); *Acceptance of deception* refers to the extent that an individual feels that deceptive communication is appropriate and/or acceptable by important others; and *Upbringing* is the extent to which a persons upbringing plays a role in their views of deception as a useful communication tool. The authors found a positive correlation between *intentionality* and *acceptance of deception*, a negative correlation between

intentionality and *deception is wrong*, and a positive correlation between *upbringing* and

deception is wrong (p. 391). Scholl and O'Hair's study is important for the current study in that

it sets out to provide a more concrete set of deception related beliefs, and an individuals beliefs

concerning deception may have an impact on their use of deceptive affection.

As research shows, communicators hold varying beliefs about the use of deception in

romantic relationships, including its acceptability, when it can and should be used, what

constitutes deception and the reasons when it is beneficial to use deception. The reviewed studies

show that many people believe there are acceptable times for using deceptive communication in

romantic relationships, and that many of these reasons are related to keeping the relationship

intact and stable. This points to the importance of looking at another aspect of romantic

relationships when considering deceptive communication, and specifically deceptive affection:

relational qualities.

Relational Qualities

This thesis focuses specifically on two relational qualities: *Satisfaction*, defined as "the

positivity of affect or attraction to one's relationship" and *commitment*, considered "the tendency

to maintain a relationship and to feel psychologically 'attached' to it" (Rusbult, 1983, p. 102).

Commitment and satisfaction are two components of Rusbult's (1980, 1983) Investment Model.

Beyond these factors, The Investment Model includes the components of investment size and

quality of alternatives. Investment size refers to the amount of resources, both intrinsic and

extrinsic, invested in the relationship. It is important to note that investments, unlike costs and

rewards, can not be separated from the relationship and, in general, are lost when the relationship

ends (Rusbult, 1983). The component of the Investment Model concerning the quality of

alternatives refers to the anticipated costs or rewards of alternative situation to the current

relationship (Rusbult, 1983). The Investment Model is an extension of Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978), and operates on the assumption that individuals are generally motivated to maximize their rewards while minimizing the costs to them.

Rusbult's (1980, 1983) model suggests that commitment can be predicted by the *bases of dependence* of satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment size. The Investment Model argues that an individual's commitment to a relationship will increase when he or she is satisfied, has no acceptable alternative and has invested in the relationship (Rusbult, 1980, 1983). Although the Investment Model is composed of these four factors (commitment, satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment size), the present study focuses on satisfaction and commitment. The specific focus on commitment and satisfaction is based on prior affection research finding no relationships to investment size and quality of alternatives (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010) and prior relationships among commitment, satisfaction, and deceptive factors (e.g., Horan & Dillow, 2009).

According to subpostulate 3a of AET, affectionate messages enhance pair bonds (Floyd, 2006). Pair bonds are "significant and long term relationships" between individuals (Floyd, 2006, p. 165). The establishment of pair bonds includes sharing resources (both material, such as food or protection and emotional, such as social support) that help sustain survival (Floyd, 2006). Floyd (2002) argues that affectionate messages likely increase chances for survival because affectionate messages contribute to the "development and maintenance of human pair bonds" (p. 136). Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2010) tested this postulate in established romantic relationships, looking specifically at the relationship between affectionate messages and relational investment. They found that affection from a romantic partner predicted satisfaction, whereas affection expressed predicted commitment.

Various studies have explored the relationship between commitment and satisfaction, with many results suggesting a positive relationship between satisfaction and commitment (Arriaga & Agnew, 2001; Givertz & Segrin, 2005; Spitzberg, Kam, & Roesch, 2005). Additionally, this is related to the Investment Model in that it suggests that an individual that is committed is one that is satisfied, in addition to having large amount invested in the relationship and poor quality alternatives (Rusbult, 1980, 1983). This shows a connection between higher levels of satisfaction and greater commitment.

Arriaga (2001) found that relationships between individuals who reported levels of satisfaction that fluctuated were more likely to end, even after controlling for overall level of satisfaction in the relationship. Their study also found that when satisfaction fluctuated, commitment was relatively lower. Arriga argued that this research shows that "individuals whose levels of satisfaction exhibit an objectively stable trend are more likely to subjectively feel committed and indeed are on a course toward greater odds of persistence" (p. 762) Arriaga's research shows another connection between commitment and satisfaction in romantic relationships, and suggests that, in addition to satisfaction predicting commitment, steady levels of satisfaction are likely to predict higher levels of commitment and lessen the likelihood a couple will break up.

Richmond (1995) examined the relationship between communication and satisfaction within marital dyads. She found that couples described as highly satisfied reported engaging in significantly more communication then those couple who were less satisfied. Interestingly, her results further suggest that the topic of the communication played a role in the relationship between satisfaction and communication. Topics that had little to do with the amount of communication included *children* and *politics*. On the other hand, *home life, the couple's sexual*

relationship, and *vacations* were found to be "substantially associated with marital satisfaction

for both spouses" (p. 157). Finally, communication concerning topics such as *friends, religion*

and *work* were associated with satisfaction for females more so than males. Richmond's (1995)

study suggests that there is likely a positive relationship between communication and

satisfaction, but it also raises questions about what may happen when that communication is

deceptive.

Relevant to the present inquiry, the relationship between deception and relational qualities

has been studied previously. Horan and Dillow (2009) aimed to discover whether or not

commitment and satisfaction and the type of deceptive message (e.g. lie, evasion, overstatement,

concealment or collusion; O'Hair & Cody, 1994) were related to shame and guilt experienced by

those using deceptive communication. They found that the type of deception used was not

related to the relational qualities of commitment and satisfaction. Additionally, the type of

deception used did not related to feelings of shame and guilt. However, they found that there was

a positive relationship between feelings of shame and guilt and relational qualities (Horan &

Dillow).

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

As research has shown, the beliefs one holds about deception in romantic relationships

plays a role in how they enact deceptive messages. These beliefs include the acceptability of

deception (Boon & McLeod, 2001; Cole, 2001), when it can and should be used (Boon &

McLeod; Scholl & O'Hair, 2005), what constitutes deception (Boon & McLeod; Levine, Asada

& Lindsey, 2003), and the reasons it is acceptable or beneficial to use in a relationship (Levine et

al.). Further, studies have shown that individuals *do* use affection to deceive their partners (e.g.,

Floyd, 2006; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011, in press) and lie about their feelings in romantic

relationships (e.g., DePaulo et al., 1996; DePaulo & Kashy, 1998, Horan & Booth-Butterfield, in press). Given that beliefs about deception are likely to influence deceptive communication (e.g., Scholl & O'Hair, 2005), it is likely, then, that one's beliefs about deception will be related to deception (e.g., frequency of partner deception and DAMs). Therefore, Research Question One is posed:

RQ1: What is the relationship between beliefs about deception and the frequency of romantic partner deceptive affectionate messages?

Richmond (1995) found that there is a positive relationship between communication and satisfaction in romantic relationships, and studies have shown a positive relationship between satisfaction and commitment (e.g., Arriaga, 2001; Givertz & Segrin, 2005; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010; Rusbult, 1980, 1983). When considering deception, individuals are faced with an interesting question: what happens to commitment and satisfaction when the communication used is deceptive? Or, what role do relational qualities play in one's decision to deceive? Beyond the above-mentioned research, studies show that affection is related to higher levels of commitment and satisfaction in romantic relationships and is beneficial to the relational environment in general (e.g., Floyd, 2006a; Goodboy et al., in press; Horan, in press; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Clearly, affection is related to an increase in positive relational qualities such as commitment and satisfaction, but, again, what happens when that affection is deceptive? Research Question Two asks the following:

RQ2: What is the relationship among frequency of romantic partner deceptive affectionate messages and relational qualities (e.g., commitment and satisfaction)?

Chapter II

Method

Participants

After receiving IRB approval, 124 individuals participated in this study (54 students from a large private, urban Midwestern University, 53 students from a midsize Northeastern school, 11 non-students from a Western urban city, 3 non-students from a large Southern city and 3 non-students from a midsize Midwest city). Thirty-six males and 83 females (5 declined to report their sex) participated, reporting on 84 male and 37 female partners (3 declined to indicate the sex of their partner). Participants ages' ranged from 18 to 52, with an average participant age of 22.58 (*SD* = 4.13). The majority of respondents described their relationship as *seriously dating* (95; 15 reported *casually dating*, 8 reported being *engaged*, 5 reported their relationship type as "*other*", and 1 declined to report their type of relationship). Relationships lasted from 3-to-120 months, with the average relationship lasting 25.30 (*SD* = 22.41) months. Most participants in the study were *white/Caucasian* (108, *Native American* = 1, *Black/African American* = 1, *Hispanic/Latino* = 5, *Asian*= 2, *other* = 6, and 1 declined to indicate their ethnicity.)

To participate in this study, respondents had to be over 18 years of age and currently in a self defined romantic relationship that has lasted for at least 3 months. This criteria has been imposed previously in studies of general and deceptive affectionate communication (Horan, in press; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010, 2011, in press). The argument in those studies, which is adopted presently, is this is an adequate amount of time for partners to establish routine levels of affectionate communication in a relationship.

Instrumentation

Respondents were first given a brief description of affectionate communication. The description, offered by Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2010) and later used in other affectionate communication studies (Horan, in press; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011, in press), is based on a synthesis of affection research and read:

> Affection consists of verbal and nonverbal messages that communicate positive regard, liking, fondness, and love. Examples of affectionate messages include, but are not limited to, the following: Holding hands, kissing, massages, hugging, putting your arm around your partner, winking at each other, saying ''I like you,'' saying ''I love you,'' telling your partner how important the relationship is, complimenting your partner, sitting close to your partner, and deeply staring into your partner's eyes.

Next, based on Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2011), respondents read a paragraph explaining that individuals sometimes communicate deceptive affectionate messages they may not be feeling, explaining:

> For example, we may tell our romantic partner that we think he/she looks "pretty" when we do not actually feel that. Or, at times we may tell our partner we "love" him/her when we really do not feel like we do. Other examples include feeling negatively toward your partner (e.g., upset, frustrated, mad) and still communicating an affectionate message (e.g., kissing, holding hands, etc.). These are normal messages, and research suggests they are regularly expressed in relationships.

Participants were then asked to estimate the number of instances in a week that they communicate deceptive affection to their partner. The following item was offered: "In the blank to the left, please list how many times, in a week, you think you communicate deceptive affection to your romantic partner (that is, estimate how many times you communicate affection you are not actually feeling to your romantic partner)". Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for each measure.

The measurement packet then transitioned to measuring basic deception practices. To control for social desirability, the following description, used in prior research (e.g., Horan &

Dillow, 2009), was offered:

> Lying occurs frequently in relationships and it is quite normal to lie from time to time. In fact, 92% of people have admitted to lying to their romantic partner about something and about one out of every three interactions between romantic partners involves a lie.

Respondents then completed Scholl and O'Hair's (2005) scale concerning *beliefs about deception.* The four beliefs about deception being measured were *intentionality, deception is wrong, acceptance of deception* and *upbringing*. An example of an item representing *intentionality* was "Sometimes I inadvertently deceive others." An example of *deception is wrong included "*My moral stance tells me that deception is never okay." An example measuring *acceptance of deception* included "People use deception for all sorts of reasons." Finally, an item measuring *upbringing* included "My family taught me a lot about whether deception is right or wrong." This scale has been used reliably in prior studies (intentionality= .89, deception is wrong= .81, acceptance of deception= .64 and upbringing= 0.78; Scholl & O'Hair, 2005). Formatting issues, however, resulted in the majority of participants skipping certain items that were subsequently deleted from analyses. From the scale measuring intentionality, the following items were deleted: "In spite of my best intentions, I sometimes realized that I deceived someone"; "I have caught myself being untruthful without intending to be"; "I have deceived someone else without being aware that I was doing it"; "I would rather not use deception even if it's to benefit the person I am deceiving" and from the scale measuring deception is wrong, the following items were deleted: "Deceiving someone else is seldom justified"; "I cannot bring myself to deceive others even if it's socially justified".

Thus, three items measured intentionality, three items measured deception is wrong, four items measured acceptance of deception, and three items measured upbringing. Participants completed the items using a 7-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating "*strongly disagree*" and

7 indicating "*agree completely*". Reliabilities for each belief is as follows: intentionality = .84,

deception is wrong = .85, acceptance of deception = .70 and upbringing = .87. Despite the

formatting issues, the reliabilities achieved in this study for three of the four beliefs about

deception were higher than those found by Scholl and O'Hair (2005), with only intentionality

being lower in this study. Specific comparisons to the how the scale was used here compared to

Scholl and O'Hair will be presented in the Discussion.

To measure *commitmen*t and *satisfaction*, participants completed two of the four

dimensions of the Investment Model (Rusbult, 1980, 1983). Respondents completed the items

using a 9-point Likert-type scale, with 0 indicating "*do not agree at all*" and 8 indicating "*agree

completely*". *Commitment* was measured using the seven global items. An example of an item

measuring commitment read: ''I want our relationship to last for a very long time.'' The five

global items were used to measure *satisfaction*. An example item measuring satisfaction read: "I

feel satisfied with our relationship." Previous studies have shown this scale to be reliable (.85;

Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010); both commitment (.88) and satisfaction (.86) were reliable

here.

Finally, participants completed Cole's (2001) scale assessing *frequency of deception.* For

this scale, respondents completed the items using a 7-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating

"*strongly disagree*" and 7 indicating "*agree completely*". This 7-point Likert format is used for

all items with the exception of the final item, which asks "In the blank to the left, please estimate

the number of times you lie to your partner during the course of a week." This scale has been

shown to be reliable in prior work (.87; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011) and, presently, an

alpha of .84 was obtained. An example item reads: "I disclose everything to my partner, both

good and bad."

To rule out any order effects, a second questionnaire format was also used, reordering the survey to commitment, satisfaction, frequency of deception, DAM frequency and beliefs about deception. Beyond the order of scales, the surveys were identical. Ninety-two people in the sample completed this second survey format. Preliminary analyses revealed none of the variables differed based on survey form, with the exception of intentionality. Participants completing surveys as they were originally explained reported higher intentionality scores ($M = 12.22$, $SD = 4.22$) compared to individuals completing the second form ($M = 9.41$, $SD = 4.28$; $t(122) = 3.21$, $p < .05$).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for all scales

	Minimum	Maximum	*M*	*SD*
DAM Frequency	.00	100.00	3.49	9.47
Frequency of Deception	8.00	55.00	26.12	11.33
Intentionality	3.00	20.00	10.14	4.42
Deception is Wrong	3.00	21.00	15.16	4.12
Acceptance of Deception	12.00	28.00	22.66	3.64
Upbringing	5.00	21.00	17.32	3.51
Commitment	18.00	56.00	47.44	9.41
Satisfaction	8.00	40.00	32.56	5.56

Chapter III

Results

Preliminary Analyses

As a way to further understand deceptive affection, frequency of general partner deception was measured. However, reported frequency of deceptive affection and general partner deception were unrelated ($r = .13$, $p > .05$).

Preliminary analyses revealed that men reported higher acceptance of deception ($M = 23.89$, $SD = 3.65$) compared to women ($M = 22.27$, $SD = 3.40$, $t(117) = 2.34$, $p < .05$). The remaining variables did not differ based on sex. Reports of commitment ($F(3,119) = 11.89$, $p < .001$) and satisfaction ($F(3,119) = 10.15$, $p < .001$) significantly differed based on the type of relationship. Post hoc analyses (Tukey) indicated casually dating ($M = 36.80$) participants were less committed than other relationship types (seriously dating = 47.99, engaged = 55.63 and other = 54.20). Likewise, casually dating participants persons were less satisfied (25.87) compared to other relationship types (seriously dating = 33.33, engaged = 34.75 and other = 33.60). No other variables differed based on relationship type.

Research Questions

Research question one asked what relationship exists between frequency of DAMs and beliefs about deception. Frequency of DAMs was unrelated to intentionality ($r = .04$, $p > .05$), deception is wrong ($r = -.09$, $p > .05$), acceptance of deception ($r = .01$, $p > .05$) and upbringing ($r = .04$, $p > .05$). To further inform research question one, the relationship among beliefs about deception and general partner deception were analyzed. Results indicated significant relationships between general partner deception and the beliefs about deception; intentionality ($r = .31$, $p < .01$), deception is wrong ($r = -.36$, $p < .001$), acceptance of deception ($r = .30$, $p < .01$)

and upbringing (r = .-.22, p < .05).

Research question two explored the relationships among relational qualities and frequency of deceptive affection. Pearson correlations revealed that frequency of DAMs was unrelated to commitment (r = -.04, p > .05) and satisfaction (r = -.04, p > .05). Similar to research question one, to further inform findings, the relationships among relational qualities and general partner deception were explored. Frequency of general partner deception was negatively related to commitment (r = -.28, p < .01) and satisfaction (r = -.28, p < .01).

Chapter IV

Discussion

As previous research has noted that affection is a key component of any romantic relationship (e.g., Floyd, 2006a), this thesis aimed to learn more about what source factors played a role in understanding the frequency of deceptive affection. Additionally, since it has been shown that the beliefs one holds concerning deception is likely to influence their use of deceptive communication in relationships (Scholl & O'Hair, 2005), this study specifically examined the relationship between the frequency of DAMs and beliefs about deception. Further, because there is a positive relationship between affection and relational qualities (e.g. Floyd, 2006a; Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010), this thesis explored the relationship between the frequency of DAMs and the relational qualities of commitment and satisfaction.

Consistent with prior research examining deception as a normal aspect of relationships (e.g. DePaulo et al., 1996; DePaulo & Kashy, 1996), and research suggesting deceptive affection to be common (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011, in press), this study found that individuals do communicate deceptive affection to their partners on a regular basis. The current study is the first of its kind to specifically ask respondents to provide the number of instances weekly in which they communicated a DAM to their romantic partner. The resulting average response of 3.49 times a week is consistent with previous work that has been done on the frequency of deceptive affection. Of particular note is that the current study's quantitative and cross-sectional nature provided a result similar to that found in Horan and Booth-Butterfield's (in press) diary studies. In their study, 57 respondents kept a diary of their use of deceptive affection over a seven-day period (with 51 of the diary sets containing deceptive affection). That study found that respondents communicated an average of 3.30 DAMs per week to their romantic partner. Both

Horan and Booth-Butterfield's study and the current study used the same criteria of relationships

of at least 3 months, examined participants of a similar age, and both studied respondents who

largely self-reported their relationship as *seriously dating* (76.6% participants here described

themselves as *seriously dating* and 89.1% described themselves as such in Horan and Booth-

Butterfield's study). Clearly, it is of interest that these two differing methods of research found

very similar results for frequency of deceptive affection in romantic relationships. This

consistency between two different designs provides compelling and encouraging support for the

idea that deceptive affection generally occurs around three times a week in romantic

relationships. Likewise, in general deception research, DePaulo et al. (1996) found that college

students reported lying in one of every three interactions and DePaulo and Kashy (1998) also

discovered that both the college students and community members in their diary study reported

telling their non-married romantic partner a lie once in every three interactions with them.

Research Question One

Research question one explored what relationship exists between the frequency of DAM

expression and beliefs about deception. Results indicated that the frequency of DAM use and

beliefs about deception were unrelated. Interestingly, though, a negative relationship was found

between general partner deception and all four of the beliefs about deception studied.

One interesting issue raised in this study, then, is whether or not participants viewed

deceptive affection as deception, seeing as beliefs about deception and DAMs were unrelated,

yet beliefs about deception and general partner deception were. This indicates that, perhaps,

people view these two forms of deception differently. Previous work (Boon & McLeod 2001;

Levine et al., 2003; Scholl & O'Hair, 2005) demonstrates that views differ on what is considered

deception, and when deception is "allowable" in relationships, so perhaps deceptive affection, if

used for the good of the relationship or to some how benefit the romantic partner, is not

considered actual deception by individual communicating these messages. In the current study,

related to the idea that general deception and deceptive affection should be considered different,

results suggest that not all respondents who noted using DAMs reported they lie to their partner.

This then could suggest that these respondents do not necessarily view DAMs as lies and instead

viewed the two categories as distinct.

Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2011) found, when experimentally exploring changes in

blood pressure and heart rate, individuals had no real physiological or emotional arousal when

recalling their DAMs. They found that neither recalling DAMs nor honest instances of

affectionate communication resulted in physiological arousal (that is, increased or decreased

heart rate or blood pressure). Additionally, their results showed that reports of feeling guilt or

shame did not change based on the motive for recalled DAMs. These findings run counter to

previous research that suggests the recall of communicating deception to a partner results in

physical (e.g. McCullough et al., 2007; Scherer & Wallbott, 1994) and emotional arousal. Horan

and Dillow (2009) found correlations among commitment, satisfaction, and the feelings of guilt

and shame. This suggests that responses to general deception and DAMs are different, and it

could be speculated that that may be because they are viewed quite differently by the person

communicating the deception or DAM.

What then makes deceptive communication and general partner deception different in

the eyes of the respondents? Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2011) explain one possibility could be

the reasons individuals believe they are using DAMs:

It should also be noted that the respondents may have believed that they were doing a

greater good for the relationship by expressing affection, but not in a totally authentic

manner. In essence, they may have believed the deception was beneficial to the

relationship and the partner. (p. 99)

With the current study in mind, this could point to differing views on deception and deceptive

affection, and provides support for the idea that, perhaps in general, individuals do not consider

these messages to be outright deception.

Related to this idea is the concept of altruistic deception, or deceptive messages that are

communicated "in order to protect or avoid hurting a loved one" (Kaplar & Gordon, 2004, p.

490). Research has shown that in close interpersonal relationships, altruism is a frequently cited

motive for deceptive communication. For example, Kaplar and Gordon found that individuals

cited altruistic reasons for their own deception much more often than they assigned this

motivation to lies in which they were the receivers. Further, DePaulo et al.'s (1996) and DePaulo

and Kashy's (1998) diary studies support this notion of altruistic deception as common in close

relationships. DePaulo et al.found that one in four lies reported were told "to benefit other

people' (p. 991) and DePaulo and Kashy found that lies told to those closest to the respondent

were relatively more often reported as "other-oriented" or altruistic. It could be speculated then,

that DAMs are often an example of this altruistic deception, as not showing affection would

cause more harm to the relationship and the receiver than deceiving them through the use of a

not entirely honest expression of affection. In other words, DAMs as altruistic deception may

likely be related most closely to DePaulo and Kashy's (1998) description of "other-oriented lies"

as told "to make things easier or more pleasant" (p. 69) for the receiver.

Additionally, Horan and Booth-Butterfield (in press) found that individuals reported

using DAMs in order to save face for their partner or to avoid/manage conflict. Individuals

reported using DAMs in order to avoid "embarrassing partners, or making them sad or hurt" (p.

TBD). That being said, individuals also reported largely negative feelings behind their DAM expression, such as temporary dissatisfaction with the relationship or their relational partner. These results together further supports the idea of altruistic deception, as individuals, despite feeling negatively towards the partner or relationship, often acted in a way (that is, using a DAM) to save the face or protect the feelings of their partner

The idea that these messages may "serve a relational maintenance function" (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2011, p. 100) could explain why individuals view them differently than outright deception. If an individual believes that the deceptive affection is for the good of their relationship or their partner, the negative social connotations associated with outright general deception may not apply. Horan and Booth-Butterfield (in press) explain that the individuals in their diary study "…likely viewed their deceptive expression as low-risk and not punitive, and instead as rewarding because difficult situations were mitigated" (p. TBD).

 Further examination of the motives behind DAMs is necessary in order to gain a more complete understanding of the beliefs about deception affection and the whether or not they are considered actual deception by those communicating these messages to their partners. Interestingly, as will be explained when discussing research question two, further results from this study may provide some contradictory evidence to this assertion that DAMs are used to facilitate a positive relational environment as there was no connection between DAM use and reports of commitment and satisfaction.

It appears then, that an individual's beliefs about deception do not necessarily apply to deceptive affection, or perhaps that one's beliefs about deception and beliefs about deceptive affection are quite different. The current study used Scholl and O'Hair's (2005) beliefs about deception scale in order to determine how an individual's beliefs about deception related to

frequency of deception and frequency of DAM use. This differs from the original use of the scale, which was to compile a list of beliefs concerning deception, and examined correlations between the beliefs they discovered as important. It is also worth noting that the scale used to measure beliefs about deception has not been used extensively, and even with items being omitted due to formatting issues, higher reliabilities were found in this study for three of the four beliefs, suggesting that the further testing of this scale is necessary. Reliabilities for the scales as used in the current study and in Scholl and O'Hair, respectively, are as follows: intentionality: .84 and .89; deception is wrong: .85 and .81; acceptance of deception: .70 and .64; upbringing: .81 and .78. It is worth noting that the single belief in which Scholl and O'Hair found a higher reliability than this study had 4 items deleted due to formatting issues. Additionally, as will be discussed in the implications for future research, these results imply that beliefs about deception, at least in terms of the scales used, do not apply to beliefs about deceptive affection, calling for the creation of a scale or modification of the scales used of the scales to measure beliefs about deceptive affection as different from outright deception (specifically in romantic relationships).

Research Question Two

Research question two examined the relationships among relational qualities and frequency of deceptive affection. Results indicated that frequency of DAM use was unrelated to commitment and satisfaction, but that general deception was negatively related to these two relational qualities. Clearly, it has been suggested that relationship quality can suffer when deception is used, but does this same notion apply to the use of deceptive affection? Related to the above discussion, these finding suggest DAMs should be considered different than other forms of deception.

Frequency of romantic partner affection is positively related to commitment and

satisfaction (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). Additionally, Rusbult (1980) explains that

"satisfaction and attraction to a relationship is a simple function of the rewards and costs (or

outcome value) associated with the relationship" (p. 184). So, when considering affection as a

reward, the idea that increased affection can lead to increased positive relational qualities is

again supported. This raises an interesting question when considering the results of this study, as

based on the above-mentioned research, DAMs, if perceived as affection, should be related

positively to relationship qualities, but instead no relationship was found. It could be related to

the idea that receiving affection (or DAMs) and communicating affection (or DAMs) differently

influence commitment and satisfaction.

Horan and Dillow (2009), examining emotions and deception, found that the type of

deceptive message communicated was not related to relational qualities. This is interesting when

considering the results obtained in this study, as the relational qualities of commitment and

satisfaction were related to deception, but not DAM use. If we were to consider DAMs a type of

deceptive message, Horan and Dillow's results would suggest that there should be no real

difference in terms of commitment and satisfaction compared to other forms of deception. These

results together can provide support for the notion discussed above that individuals views DAMs

and general deception different, and that in terms of relational qualities such as commitment and

satisfaction, again, perhaps do not view DAMs as outright deception. Worth noting though, is

Horan and Dillow's (2009) discussion that severity of lie type was not included in their study,

and would possibly play a role in the affect of lie type on reported levels of commitment and

satisfaction. Horan and Booth-Butterfield (in press) found that of ten instances of deceptive

affection that were discovered, three individuals indicated that the responses from their partners

were not particularly negative, noting that they "laughed it off", "did not really care" or "were

not too upset" (p. TBD). Five individuals responded that their significant others reacted

negatively, though it could be suggested that their responses were likely still less negative than

with a more severe lie. With regards to the current study, it is possible that DAMs, even if

viewed negatively, are likely to be viewed as less severe forms of deception than other types of

deceptive messages.

Interestingly, the results showed that there was not a connection between DAMs and

satisfaction or commitment. This is perhaps contrary to the idea proposed above that DAM use

may be seen as different from deception because it is viewed as possibly beneficial to the

relationship. While it may be true that many individuals do believe they are acting out these

messages in order to benefit the relationship, it appears that this may not actually be occurring.

Conceivably, it could be that these messages are being used with the best of intentions, but

simply not resulting in the desired affects of increased positive relational qualities. As Cole

(2001) found that use of deception is related to negative outcomes for the individual, it is

possible that the individuals using these DAMs are more negatively affected by them then they

may intend to be.

As noted in the review of literature, the idea that affectionate communication is beneficial

in relationships (e.g., Goodboy et al., in press; Horan, in press; Horan & Booth-Butterfield,

2010) and is even related to higher reported levels of commitment (Horan & Booth-Butterfield),

and satisfaction (Floyd, 2002; Horan & Booth-Butterfield). It may be argued then, that the

positive elements of *received* DAMs are similar to those of actual affection, as long as it is not

discovered as anything more than affection. Additionally, Horan and Booth-Butterfield (2010)

found that both giving and receiving affectionate messages were positively related to

commitment and satisfaction within romantic relationships.

With DAMs though, when looking at the receiver we must consider that the motive behind the message is different than affection felt genuinely at the moment. Horan and Booth-Butterfield (in press) explain "Understanding the feelings masked and motives for DAMs could reveal whether DAMs should truly be considered a risk during affectionate interactions" (p. TBD). That is, DAMs could be considered risky because they may be masking the negative feelings of the person expressing the DAM. Horan and Booth-Butterfield found, in their diary study, that the majority of respondents reported *self-orientated feelings* when communicating DAMs, though *partner related feelings* and *context specific feelings* were also reported. Key to this discussion is the result that most of the feelings reported appeared to be negative, supporting the idea that expressing DAMs may be risky to the receiver, as it could be indicative of negative feelings towards them or the relationship. This could affect the positive effects such as increased commitment and satisfactions associated with higher levels of affection.

Additionally, it is important to look at the source of the DAM and how his/her own feelings of commitment and satisfaction are affected by their DAM use. Horan and Dillow (2009)'s assertion that "sources of deceptive messages are impacted by their own dishonest communication" supports this idea (p. 161). That being said, results here suggest that perhaps even for DAMs, there is more of a positive affect on the relationship than a negative one, as their was no relationship between the two, but not a negative one. Further, perhaps sources do not even put thought into their deceptive communication, leading to the lack of a relationship between DAMs and relational qualities in the results of this study. Horan and Booth-Butterfield's (in press) results lend support to this as, 31.6% of their respondents replied they thought about the DAMs they communicated *not often* and 54.4% noted they only thought about them

somewhat often. This indicates that perhaps those communicating the messages are simply not affected by the DAMs they communicate, and rarely even give them thought.

Limitations

As formatting issues resulted in the deletion of six items from Scholl and O'Hair's (2005) scales concerning beliefs about deception, the removal of these items is certainly a limitation of this study. Interestingly though, even with these items removed, the current study found all scales to be reliable. Further, with the exception of "intentionality", the reliabilities for how the scales were currently used were actually higher than those achieved in the initial study introducing the scales. So, while no doubt the deletion of some items is a limitation, the fact that this scale has not been widely used, and even with items deleted, this study found all scales reliable shows the need for further studies to implement this scale and further test its reliability.

A second limitation of this study is the age of the participants. The sample was made up primarily of traditionally college aged individuals, with an average age of 22.58. While a limitation, this sample can provide insight into the use of deceptive affectionate messages at an age when most individuals are in dating relationships, as opposed to married or more established couples. Future studies could examine the use of deceptive affection in these forms of relationships. Additionally, Serota et al. (2010) determined that age and deception are related, and that age was a important predictor of frequency of deception, with an increase in age resulting in a decrease in use of deception. This result is also consistent with DePaulo et al's (1996) findings that college aged respondents lied twice a week, while a older community sample reported one lie a week. This connection between age and use of deception is important to keep in mind when considering this limitation.

Third, the study was cross-sectional in nature. That being said, as mentioned above, the

general mean for frequency of the deception affectionate messages was consistent with that found in a previous diary study (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, in press), which examined deceptive affection over a seven day period, providing support for the results obtained in this study.

Directions for Future Research

While this study provides insight into the use of deceptive affection in romantic relationships, there is much work to be done. Future studies on DAM use are needed to provide a more comprehensive knowledge base concerning the use of these communication strategies in romantic relationships. It is encouraging that this study found results consistent with previous work on the frequency of DAM use, and calls for future research to be done. Future studies could investigate the use and frequency of DAMs at differing stages in romantic relationships, examining if DAM use becomes more or less prevalent as a romantic relationship progresses and becomes more established.

A second area of DAM research that could benefit from further examination is, as mentioned in the discussion of this study, is how beliefs about deception and beliefs about deceptive affection differ. Further, future research should consider what these differences mean for the use of these messages in relationships. As the current study found no relationship between the beliefs about deception scales used (Scholl & O'Hair, 2005), further research could examine how these beliefs differ and provide a scale to measure beliefs about deceptive affection specifically.

Another area of DAM research that could be further studied is sex differences in the expression of DAMs. It would be beneficial to discover if men and women express DAMs more or less frequently or use DAMs differently. Further, if differences in the use and frequency of

DAM expression do exist based on sex, further research seeking to examine the reasons why would be important for future DAM research.

An additional area for future research this study makes evident is examining how and why people view deception and deceptive affection differently. It would be compelling to study individuals beliefs about deception and whether or not they view deceptive affection as deception. As mentioned previously, perhaps one's beliefs about whether or not deception is wrong plays a role in their beliefs about deceptive affection as deception or something different. A question this then raises would be how one's beliefs about DAMs as deception affects the frequency with which they use these messages.

Finally, taking into account the formatting issues that resulted in the deletion of items in scales measuring beliefs about deception (Scholl & O'Hair, 2005), the previous study could be replicated. As mentioned above though, reliabilities for these altered scales in the current study were higher than those found in the original study. This indicates that these scales should be further tested in future research.

Conclusion

This thesis, looking at an understudied, but very important area of both affection and deception research, has provided key findings and raised a number of questions that should be addressed in future research on deceptive affection in romantic relationships. Results revealed no real relationship between frequency of DAM use and beliefs about deception or the relational qualities of commitment and satisfaction, despite finding relationships between general partner deception and both beliefs about deception and commitment and satisfaction. Further, these results suggest that individuals likely view their deceptive affectionate messages and general partner deception quite differently. The present study raises a number of questions to be

addressed in future research, including general examinations of DAMs and inquires into

differing perceptions and views of deception and DAMs. While further research is necessary,

this study is an important step towards a more complete understanding of the use of deceptive

affection in romantic relationships.

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