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CLAIMS EDUCATION CONFERENCE ORLANDO, NOVEMBER 5-7 STILL TIME TO REGISTER - Details In This Newsletter

TAKING A FRESH LOOK AT LYING: *How New Scientific Research & Technology is Changing Our Understanding of Deception*

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Why do people lie and cheat? To discover truth in an examination under oath, or some other type of interrogation, an interviewer must know the enemy, which is deceit. To invoke Sun Tzu's ancient wisdom, if you do not know your enemy, for every victory gained you also will suffer a defeat.¹

Traditional interrogation strategy has been grounded on a hazy economics-based theory called the Simple Model of Rational Crime. Lying is analyzed as a simple matter of cost versus benefit. Investigators attempt to curb deceit by appeal to the rational mind. The subject is urged to consider the high probability of being caught in a deception (high risk) along with the harshness of punishment that would result (high cost).

Innovative research suggests new ways to sharpen those tactics. What emerges from recent studies in social science is that—surprise—*everyone lies*, but still *honesty* is a critical part of self-image. This tension is resolved in a curious manner: it turns out people lie to themselves about how honest they really are. Researchers have dubbed these insights the Self-Image Model of Deception.²

In a nutshell, researchers postulate that where lying starts and stops is determined by a person's perception of what it takes to remain an honest person. Risk versus benefit has comparatively little to do with it. Consider a study of false self-reporting of test results. On average, a typical research subject in the study who was asked to self-report his score—in truth, *four* correct answers—reliably inflated the score to *six*. Changes in variables composing the cost-benefit model did not change this result. The subject was not encouraged by a lesser risk of being caught or by enhanced profit. On the other hand, the perceived deceptiveness of *other people* in the study, who presumably saw themselves as acting in a basically honest manner, had a dramatic effect. When others were seen to cheat, cheating seemed something like *honesty*. As an enemy then, deceit turns out to be less like *Lex Luthor*, the ruthless businessman, and more a shape-shifter among a crowd.

The Self-Image Model suggests that a worthy battleground is in the terrain of establishing what a truly honest and upright person would do in the same situation. *Everyone lies*, but no more than they believe an honest person would do in similar circumstances. After building rapport with the subject as a partner in seeking the truth, the investigator should distance the subject from anyone in the same circle who obviously has appeared to cheat or lie. The subject may have acted in concert with them in the past, but was taken advantage of, was in a noxious relationship, or acted without deliberation. An honest and upright person would strive toward self-improvement, would avoid compounding an error, and would diligently work toward the truth. By putting the witness in this mindset, the investigator is more likely to subdue deceit, and emerge from the interrogation room with the facts as a truly honest person would convey them. ▲

¹ Sun Tzu, The Art of War., ² Dan Ariely, The (Honest) Truth About Dishonesty.

Mr. Brink will elaborate on the Self-Image Model of Deception at the Claims Education Conference during his presentation.



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