

# **Innovative Deception Across Cultures**

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## **Abstract**

In general, creativity is associated with originality and usefulness, and innovation can be considered as the monetization of creativity through enterprise. More recently, research has explored the dark side of creativity, where original thinking is used to meet negative or malicious goals, with or without the intent to hurt others. Behaviors and traits related to deception and misrepresentation feature prominently as correlates of such dark creativity. Research has also found robust differences in the manner in which deception is perceived and conveyed across cultures as well as in the preferences for truth-telling. Further, culture shapes perceptions and attitudes not only toward creative endeavors and accomplishments, but also toward the means of attaining them. The present work ties together these strands of research, presenting an anecdotal account of the use of innovative deception in diverse cultures across contexts. We discuss examples of financial fraud and other unlawful activities to illustrate cases of innovative deception. Drawing from research in creativity, innovation, and morality across cultures, an integrative description of innovative deception is presented. Existing and emerging consequences of the same are discussed (e.g., fake news as innovative deception in political propaganda).

*Keywords:* cross-cultural research; deception; dishonesty; innovation; malevolent creativity

## **Innovative Deception Across Cultures**

India's largest corporate accounting scandal came to light in 2009. Satyam Computer Services' chairperson, Ramalinga Raju, admitted to taking multiple avenues to cook the books of the company. In addition to falsifying accounts, Raju confessed to creating fake invoices, diverting funds to over 300 investment companies, and investing in real estate. The scam only came to light when the realty market collapsed and Raju found no alternative but to admit to his misdemeanors. The scandal had repercussions across the world, as PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) served as independent auditors at Satyam, and had clearly not adhered to the requisite auditing standards. International organizations like Credit Suisse ended their engagement with PwC in the wake of this scandal (Gray et al., 2020).

On the other side of the Atlantic, The Fyre Festival promised to be an immersive music festival over two weekends in 2017 on an island in the Bahamas. Organizers, from the United States, charged attendees hundreds or thousands of dollars for this luxury experience with the festival being widely advertised on social media via paid influencers. The festival itself was a disaster to say the least--lack of amenities, food, plumbing, and essentially fraudulent guarantees. Billy McFarland, one of the organizers, admitted to defrauding investors and attendees in 2018 in the aftermath of this enormous scam (C. Wang, 2018). Though several aspects of this event were riddled with deception, some were even original, in that defrauding a number of ticket-holders who probably wanted to experience something like Woodstock were a ripe demographic toward whom such a festival could be marketed (Smith, 2019). Like the Satyam scam, the Fyre festival was overrun by deceptive behavior, which was executed in a novel manner to avoid detection for a substantial period of time.

Such case studies bring to the fore several questions, such as whether most scams are innovative in their use of deception. Terms like innovative deception are likely to be unfamiliar to most readers, and with good reason. Usually, the academic field of innovation research is less likely to combine negative connotations, especially in the moral context, with innovative or creative behavior. However, more recent and holistic examinations of creativity have shed light on its dark side (e.g., Cropley et al., 2010). This chapter aims to present an integrative account of creativity, innovation, and deception across cultures, expanding on terms such as dark innovation and innovative deception. The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows: first, we discuss the dark sides of creativity and innovation, highlighting the differences between the two. The role of deception in meeting undesirable, self-interested, selfish, and even evil goals in an original way is then examined. The subsequent sections outline the role of culture in deception and lying as well as some motivators to deceive across cultures. We also discuss how culture can moderate the expression and acceptance of creative thinking or innovative behavior, highlighting cultural similarities and differences. Thereafter we discuss examples of dark innovation across cultures, highlighting commonalities across case studies, especially in terms of deceptive and fraudulent activities. The chapter concludes by presenting avenues for future research, a synthesis of innovative deception, as well as emerging consequences of the same.

### **Dark Creativity and Dark Innovation**

Creativity and creative endeavors are typically understood to be “good” and socially desirable ways to achieve goals. The term dark creativity almost seems like an oxymoron (see also Gaut, 2010)—how can a construct so pure and benevolent be associated with harm? Yet, there are numerous examples where individuals have used ingenious ways to meet a selfish or even evil goals. Consider an individual who feels they were treated unfairly at work and looked

over for promotion; they may choose to retaliate by figuring out a new way to get paid leave when on vacation (selfish) or finding where their boss' child goes to school and make a bomb threat over a call (evil). Dark creative actions have been conceptualized as using original means to meet self-interested or nefarious ends; classifications also distinguish negative creativity (James et al., 1999) wherein there is no intent to harm another, from malevolent creativity (Cromptley et al., 2008), which comprises deliberate harm.

The AMORAL model of dark creativity (Kapoor & Kaufman, 2022) proposes that the emergence of such behavior is driven by a combination of antecedents, mechanisms at an individual level, and operants in the environment that culminate in the realization of the act. The dark creative behavior itself has aftereffects in the short term and may leave a legacy in the long term. A relevant antecedent to the present discussion is resources, including money and other tangible rewards that can motivate one to cut corners in novel ways. This is because innovation is associated with enterprises and organizational contexts, where unless a firm is not-for-profit, the primary motive is to gain resources. Creative ideas fuel innovation, which is the observable implementation of such ideas (Amabile et al., 1996). Note that there is no claim that making money through innovation is wrong; the manner in which an innovation is implemented can be considered wrong (by some). For instance, when innovations lead to the benefit of a few at the cost of several, they can cross over to the dark side.

Coad et al. (2021) curated a special issue in the journal *Industry and Innovation* on the dark side of innovation, highlighting the types of harm that innovation can and has led to, ranging from environmental degradation to damaging society. Think about all the innovations in the last century that are contributing to climate change today, and now think about whether newer innovations can help us cool the planet again. This recursive use of creative thinking--

innovation to unintended and unanticipated harm back to innovation--can contribute to the dark side, especially if allowed to proceed unabated. Just as with creativity, the dark side of innovation, particularly open innovation, has been the topic of recent study (Biggi & Giuliani, 2021). In the context of the current chapter, dark innovations that include a measure of deception can lead to further harm. For instance, Volkswagen skirted regulatory checks by intentionally designing diesel engines to give false NO<sub>x</sub> readings, thereby using innovation to deceive (Coad et al., 2021).

### ***The Role of Deception***

Although research on the overlap between innovation and deception is scarce, there is considerable work on the relationships between creative thinking and the use of deception. More broadly, research has examined the relationships between creativity and (a) integrity (Beaussart et al., 2013), (b) lies to resolve social dilemmas (Walczyk et al., 2008), (c) the tendency to not only be more dishonest (Gino & Ariely, 2012), but also justify transgressions more easily (e.g., Mai et al., 2015), and (d) moral foundations, where malevolent creativity was associated with less concern for all morality (Kapoor & Kaufman, 2021). More specifically, Kapoor and Khan (2017) examined the role of deception in dark creativity, highlighting the overlap between cognitive and moral flexibility via deception when trying to meet a negative goal in a novel manner. For instance, it was easier to come up with a deceptive original solution to a problem when the objective was nefarious rather than noble.

However, studies in this area remain inconclusive regarding whether creativity is positively (Shen et al., 2019) or negatively (Storme et al., 2020) associated with morality and morally tinged behaviors like deception. The nature of this association depends on various

factors, including but not limited to: how creativity is measured (self-report/behavioral task), how deception is measured (self-report/behavioral task), the goal of deception (prosocial or antisocial), the context in which tasks are performed (artificial/real-world), and individual differences in proclivities to be creative and deceptive.

Thus, the dark side of innovation may be as susceptible to the influence of deceptiveness as the dark side of creativity. To attain socially undesirable outcomes (or personally desirable ones, depending on your perspective), it is likely that morality will be overlooked. However, we argue that cultural contexts can theoretically moderate when, how, and to what extent innovation and dark innovation can emerge. The latter is further dependent on how deception is perceived, communicated, detected, and the like across cultures.

### ***The Role of Culture in Deception (and Lying)***

Despite extensive research conducted in the field of cultural studies and the burgeoning field of deception research, few studies have sought to explore the impact of culture upon deception. Highlighting this situation, Lapinski and Levine (2000, p. 57) observe that:

“... one issue which has remained largely ignored by researchers of deception and deceptive messages, is culture. Nearly all of the studies examining deceptive communication have been from a Western perspective.”

Similarly, studies of deception are often studies only of lying. As a result, most studies of the relationship between culture and deception actually focus on the relationship between culture and lying. Critically, however, deception is a significantly broader topic than lying alone, and lying provides a weak and impoverished paradigm for the study of deception in general. Even

within this subset of the study of lying, the consideration of cultural differences is still, seemingly, rare:

“An important drawback of previous empirical work on this topic is that only few studies have investigated people’s concept of lying in non-Western samples.” (Reins et al., 2021, in abstract)

Lying depends upon the communication of statements that the liar knows to be false. However, other forms of deception do not require any false statement to be made, or indeed any statement at all. In addition, where statements *are* communicated, it is entirely feasible to deceive without lying, and by communicating nothing but the truth (Or et al., 2017; Vincent Marelli & Castelfranchi, 1981). This form of deceptive strategy is known as ‘paltering’, and can be lingual (Rogers et al., 2017; Schauer & Zeckhauser, 2009) or temporal (Henderson, 2019) in nature.

Thus, there exist a number of significant knowledge gaps at the heart of the relationship between deception and culture. Resultant research questions include:

- Are the factors that precipitate the need or the desire to deceive culturally-specific?
- Do cultures differ in their intentions, goals, forms, means of execution, and the outcomes of their deception?
- Do different cultures plan and execute deceptive action in different ways?
- Do people from different cultures have differing levels of vulnerability to deception, and are they deceived in different ways?
- Do cultures differ in what they consider deceptive? And do they differ in their attitudes towards deception?
- Do cultures differ in how they detect and respond to deception?

Add to this layers of creativity and innovation across cultures and we arrive at the title of this chapter. Research has suggested that cultural similarities and differences exist in the manifestation of creativity and innovation (e.g., Westwood & Low, 2003). Similarly, it is important to remember that creative and innovative behavior is highly complex and cannot be explained by any singular determinant, such as culture. Therefore, we assume that cultural dimensions can enhance or dampen innovative expression in a macro sense, which may not necessarily be valid for *all* individuals within a certain culture. Similarly, microcultures, such as those within a subgroup or an organization can also impact the expression of innovation. For instance, a multinational corporation headquartered in the UK, and having an office in Malaysia may institute similar policies encouraging innovation regardless of geographical location. Therefore, the expression of such innovative ideas is likely to be context-specific.

Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimensions<sup>1</sup> have been widely studied in this regard. Research has consistently demonstrated how cultures that are individualistic, lower on power distance, and less avoidant of uncertainty are more likely to be creative and innovative (Efrat, 2014; Kapoor et al., 2021; Shane, 1993). In other words, societies that encourage autonomy, are more egalitarian, and more tolerant of risk and change facilitate greater innovation. Could it be that such characteristics also spur dark innovation? For instance, research has found that ambiguous contexts encourage creative actors to be dishonest (Gino & Ariely, 2012). Therefore, do cultures that tolerate ambiguity provide situations where individuals can game the system more? On the other hand, there are cultural universals, such as language, kin groups, political systems,

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<sup>1</sup> These comprise the following: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, long term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint; it is theorized that nations differ across these dimensions. For more information, the reader is directed to <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/>

technology, and the like, that may serve as domains within which (dark) innovation may be employed.

Before delving into examples of dark innovation across cultures, it is important to assess what drives individuals across cultures to employ deception as an interpersonal strategy.

### **Motivators to Deceive Across Cultures**

What leads somebody to deceive another person? Why would somebody choose deception as their preferred strategy over other potentially viable approaches? And do common rationales arise across different cultures?

Deception occurs throughout nature and confers evolutionary advantage upon both predators and prey. Organisms that can deceive their competitors stand a better chance of surviving long enough to reproduce. The long-term evolutionary advantages of employing deception have received significant attention (e.g., Bond & Robinson, 1988; Covacio, 2003; Lindstedt & Morkkonen, 2014; Morkkonen & Lindstedt, 2016).

In humans, many factors can precipitate the desire and intent to deceive others. In all cases, the deceiver identifies a problem or opportunity and recognizes the potential for deception to deliver advantage. This consideration may be informal and fleeting or intentional and structured.

Whereas the desire to survive (both as a survival instinct and an intentional 'will to live') and to gain advantage are universal, different cultures will reflect different factors that bring about the need or the desire to deceive.

## *Desperation*

The deceiver has no alternative means for survival. For example, within impoverished communities, children or adults may be driven to scamming or pickpocketing simply to put food on the table. However, some studies (Aksoy & Palma, 2019 who studied Guatemalan coffee farmers; Boonmanunt et al., 2020 who studied Thai rice farmers), suggest that scamming and cheating occur equally under conditions of scarcity and abundance — although such studies are often based upon artificial self-reported lying tasks. Desperation can also increase the likelihood of becoming a target of deception.

Fontes and O’Neill (2020) studied telemarketing scams operated by incarcerated prisoners in Guatemala, who use smuggled cell phones to run their operations. The researchers frame the prisoners’ scams as a means to “make ends meet”:

“From what Archimedean point of morality does one leverage a lesson about doing the right thing, when the perpetrators have their backs against a wall for even the most basic needs and the most powerful authorities in the land operate by the same logics?... Born into poverty, caught up by gangs, then incarcerated by the state, they make ends meet by fishing with their phone. They want no more than what they promise their victims: a better life. And they are willing to manipulate and trample on others’ hopes and dreams to get it.”

(Fontes & O’Neill, 2020, p. 144)

## *Asymmetry*

Deception provides a means to level the playing field in the face of overwhelming odds. A smaller, weaker competitor can use deception to mislead a larger, stronger competitor to

misunderstand the situation, in order that they act in a manner that is prejudicial to their interests and advantageous to the deceiver's interests (Gulsby, 2010).

“Asymmetric warfare comprises attempts to circumvent or undermine an opposing force's strengths while exploiting his weaknesses and vulnerabilities. The weaker party does this using methods that differ significantly from the apparently stronger party; the weaker party typically employs innovative, non-traditional tactics, weapons, or technologies that can be applied at all levels of warfare—strategic, operational, and tactical—and across the spectrum of military operations.” (Metz & Johnson, 2001, p. 5)

Asymmetry can relate to differing levels of physical capacity; cognitive, intellectual, motivational, and creative abilities; and information ownership and access (including online and virtual capabilities). Cultures may differ across these dimensions, thereby motivating or necessitating different propensities to deceive.

Clots-Figueras et al. (2015) found that asymmetric knowledge between competitors increases the probable use of deception. Using an investment game, they found that when investees were aware that an investor did not know the expected rate of return, 66% of them misled investors regarding the anticipated return. Investors believed almost 50% of the deceptive return rates that investees communicated.

### ***Efficiency***

Deception may provide a cheaper, more straightforward, or more economical means to gain advantage over a target in comparison to non-deceptive means. For example, it is usually cheaper, simpler, and more reliable to cheat at casino games than to rely on probability alone. As S. W. Erdnase, author of perhaps the world's most widely cited book on card cheating, suggests:

“Manipulation is more profitable than speculation.” (Erdnase, 1902, pp. 9–10)

Although deception can be cognitively demanding (Patterson, 2009; Sporer, 2016; Van't Veer et al., 2014), some research suggests that repeated use of deception and familiarity with its application reduces cognitive load (Van Bockstaele et al., 2015) and increases its effectiveness (Hu et al., 2012).

### ***Opportunity***

The deceiver discovers an unexpected opportunity to gain an advantage over others. Opportunities to deceive will depend upon a variety of factors including: frequency of encountering new people, ability to access targets directly or indirectly, learning of new opportunities from one's social network, ability to access technology and equipment, the target's vulnerability, and a temporal window that enables alignment across all of the proceeding factors.

In 2009, police in Nevada arrested a woman they had nicknamed the ‘Sticky Note Bandit’ (TeSelle, 2009). The scammer, Kathleen Vinoson, targeted stores, hotels, grocers and video stores across Northern California, obtaining refunds for items that she had never purchased. Her approach was to discreetly put a note on an unattended cash register or manager's desk, requesting that the person discovering the note "Kindly assist Mrs. Kidwell. She is a very nice lady and a great customer." and that they provide her with a cash refund for items that she had returned earlier in the day. This incredibly simple means of scamming a store was highly efficient, yet highly effective. It relied upon recognizing opportunistically that tills within the stores had other sticky notes attached that related to refunds.

Hasnan et al. (2014) studied 53 Malaysian firms that were convicted of issuing fraudulent financial statements from 1996 to 2007. They found that three factors determined fraudulent

financial reporting practices; predisposition (i.e., related party transactions, history of prior violations, founders on board), motive (i.e., economic factors, ownership factors, political factors) and opportunity (i.e., poor corporate governance, poor audit quality, and outside directors that are overcommitted).

### ***Social Contagion***

Deceptive behavior is acquired, normalized, and practiced via a process of enculturation (e.g., children learn to lie from their parents, who routinely tell blatant white lies among the family to lubricate social interactions). Wiltermuth et al. (2017) found that people judged creative forms of unethical behavior to be less unethical than less creative forms of unethical behavior, particularly when the unethical behaviors imposed relatively little direct harm on victims. Perceptions of competence can thus positively color morality judgments, even when the competence displayed stems from committing an unethical act. People are judged as morally better for performing bad deeds well as compared to performing bad deeds poorly. In addition to punishing creative forms of unethical behavior less severely than they punished less-creative forms of unethical behavior, they were also more likely to emulate the behavior themselves.

This view corresponds with that of Ariely (2012, pp. 191–216) who similarly concluded that deception is socially transmissible and that its spread creates an environment in which deception becomes normalized.

Deceptive knowledge and practice is spread via social contagion in tightly-knit, like-minded sub-cultures, including in criminals (Tittle et al., 2012), scammers (Maurer, 1940, pp. 247–252), pickpockets (Maurer, 1955), prisoners (Damm & Gorinas, 2020; Park & Kim, 2019), magicians (Jones, 2011, pp. 69–74), hackers (Marcum et al., 2014; Morris & Blackburn, 2009),

students (Aliverdina et al., 2016; Stogner et al., 2013), etc. Such sub-cultures now also share their knowledge and experience online, thereby enabling social learning about deception in the virtual world.

In addition to the aforementioned motivations to deceive, deception may also arise as a viable solution to a complex problem. For example, a film maker blends Computer Generated Imagery with live action as a practical means to simulate events that are too difficult, risky, or costly to create for real (e.g., Cammell, 2020). Similarly, if the deceiver works in a profession that necessitates deceiving others (e.g., undercover police, military deceivers, magicians), ample opportunities to deceive arise.

Against this background of scholarship on innovation, culture, and deception, we now proceed to integrate these lines of research.

### **Dark Innovation across Cultures**

Cultures and individuals therein vary in terms of their preferences for truth-telling (Abeler et al., 2019), lying tendencies (Choi et al., 2011), and patterns of rewards or punishment for deception or honesty (C. S. Wang & Leung, 2010). Nearly all examinations of lying/truth-telling such as these involve experimental paradigms (e.g., Abeler et al., 2019; Rosenbaum et al., 2014), often using participants who are naive, non-experienced, and non-experts at deceiving others (as opposed to professional magicians, for instance). Further, deception in artificial setups is studied using abstract, non-meaningful tasks that do not involve realistic stakes, risks, or consequences. Consider a task where the amount of money you can earn is dependent on a die roll, and you can roll this die in an opaque cup without revealing the true result to the experimenter (see also Abeler et al., 2019). Tasks like these have been used to measure whether

participants engage in deception and clearly have low ecological validity and generalizability. Therefore, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of innovative deception, we rely on examples and anecdotal evidence of the same.

### ***Levels of Global Deception***

No standard measures of deception are compiled globally. However, global fraud surveys are produced by a variety of financial institutions, which do provide a comparative measure of one class of deception.

PwC's 2020 Global Economic Crime and Fraud Survey (PwC, 2020) found that global crime and fraud in 2019-2020 amounted to \$42Bn in losses. The primary types of fraud contributing to these losses were Customer Fraud, Cybercrime, Asset Misappropriation, and Bribery and Corruption. And nearly half of reported incidents resulting in losses of US\$100 million or more were committed by insiders.

According to Reuters (Withers, 2021), Britain is "the bank scam capital of the world." The country's super-fast payments infrastructure allows transfers between bank accounts to settle instantly rather than in hours or days, as in the United States and other developed banking markets. Faster banking therefore means faster fraud. And when this is coupled with the UK's relatively light policing of fraud-related crime, plus its use of the world's most widely used language, English, Britain is an ideal global test bed for financial scams.

Bank fraud amounted to £754M (\$1Bn) in the first six months of 2021. This figure is up 30% from the same period in 2020, according to data from banking industry body UK Finance, and up more than 60% from 2017, when it began compiling the figures. This represents a per

capita fraud rate roughly triple that seen in the United States in 2020, according to a Reuters calculation from UK Finance and the latest available Federal Trade Commission data.

The fraud pioneered in the UK is subsequently replicated in other countries. Ayelet Biger-Levin, vice president of product strategy at US-based cybersecurity firm BioCatch (which provides anti-fraud technology to banks) states that:

"The most sophisticated fraud tends to start in the UK, and then move two years later to the US and then around the world."

Ayelet Biger-Levin, reported in Withers (2021).

Let us now consider another, globally more significant, example of exploiting cultural knowledge relating to how a target attends to, perceives, and makes sense of their environment.

In January 2022, Russia began to move over 126,000 troops to the Ukrainian border, along with 30,000 pro-Moscow separatists in the contested Donbas region. In response, NATO bolstered its deterrence in the Baltic Sea region. In parallel with the Russian movement, air force chiefs sparked an attack scare by planting war plane transponders on military vehicles, which grouped up and began to move in circles at West Russian airports close to the Ukraine border (Hughes, 2022). The ruse looked like 30 military planes assembling to launch a coordinated maneuver, most likely a border incursion. However, RC-135 Rivet Joint reconnaissance aircraft that were monitoring the situation did not detect any other indicators to suggest that real aircraft were deploying. This pointed to the maneuver being a deception activity designed to distract from another activity happening elsewhere, and as such, it would keep NATO guessing.

While this activity was identified as deception, some analysts suggested that the entire buildup of forces along the Ukrainian border was a case of strategic deception (e.g., Giles, 2022):

“The west has been fixated for more than two months on Russian preparations to mount a new land invasion of Ukraine. Except, it hasn’t happened – and it’s not likely to happen, at least in the form that’s most commonly imagined. Russia has used the bright, shiny object of an obvious troop concentration to panic the west into considering seriously its demands for rolling back NATO. But by focusing on the wrong problem, and joining in negotiations on Russia’s terms, the US and NATO have fallen for a massive strategic deception operation.”

When Russia previously rehearsed troop movements in 2021, Western analysts dismissed the possibility of a major assault because key veracity indicators were missing. These included the movement of key equipment, medical supplies, ammunition, and other logistics central to Russian military doctrine for major land operations. However, on this occasion, all of these indicators were present and highly visible. The threat was therefore assessed as credible, and the West was forced to make necessary contingencies for a Russian invasion, including the reservation of deployable forces, vehicles, weapons, ammunition, equipment, food, medical supplies, transportation, and logistics.

When Russia did invade Ukraine on 24th February 2022, it did so under the auspices of what it claimed was a “special military operation” to “save” Donbas residents from a “genocide”, and to “demilitarize and denazify” Ukraine (Nikolskaya & Osborn, 2022; Rice-Oxley, 2022; Weber et al., 2022). At the time of writing this chapter, Ukrainian President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has, in recent peace talks with Russia, conceded that Ukraine will not become a NATO member (The Guardian, 2022).

## *Common Patterns of Deception Across Cultures*

Common strategies for deceiving can be found across many different cultures. However, instantiations of the deceptive strategies employed include culturally specific cues that, taken together, create patterns that are meaningful in the context of the target's culture. For example, drug smuggling is common across many different cultures. The most common strategies for smuggling drugs involve creatively 'repackaging' them so that they resemble something else:

“Repackaging hides the real by disguising. It wraps a thing differently, modifying its appearance. It is simulated metamorphosis. Repackaging is done by adding or subtracting characteristics to transform them into a new pattern that resembles something else.”

(Whaley, 1982, p. 184)

Examples of culturally-specific deceptive repackaging practices include:

- 'Brown Sugar' (inferior quality heroin) being passed off as 'prasadam' (religious offerings) in India (TNM Staff, 2020).
- Heroin packed into cords that were woven into Persian rugs, and shipped out of Iran to China and Europe (Goebel & Breitenbach, 2014; Reuters Staff, 2008).
- 110kg of liquid ketamine, valued at HK\$58M (over US\$7M), bottled and labelled as rose water (used as a perfume in Muslim, Hindu, and Zoroastrian religious ceremonies). The ketamine was intercepted by Hong Kong customs in 2021 (thestandard.com.hk., 2021)
- Liquid steroids, disguised as 'Gay Lube Oil', sent from Thailand to Australia (abc.net.au., 2008).
- A baseball cap intercepted by Peruvian National Police that had been sent from Lima to Hawaii. The cap's fabric, which weighed 852g, was heavily impregnated with cocaine

silicon. A chemical process would later extract the cocaine from the fabric (Drug Enforcement Administration, 2003).

- Bricks of methamphetamine covered in chocolate and wrapped with packaging to resemble Japanese chocolate bars, intercepted at LAX en route to Japan (Associated Press., 2015).
- Cocaine that was disguised as charcoal, shipped from South America to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. A complex chemical process was used to give the drugs a very similar form and color as charcoal, and eliminate the characteristic smell of cocaine. The cocaine had a street value of \$41.5M (Guy, 2021).
- An El Salvador smuggler who attempted to bring 150g of cocaine into Washington's Dulles International Airport, hidden in sealed clam shells (Babay, 2011).
- Compressing cocaine and shaping it to resemble Pringles, then transporting them in a sealed Pringles tube within the UK (Vice Staff, 2016).
- Melting marijuana and mixing it with sugar and food coloring to create 'THC Jolly Ranchers' candy, that was then taken into school by teenagers (McCloskey, 2018).
- Melting cocaine into wax crayons, which were then used by children to draw a set of pictures in a coloring book. This was then mailed to a prison inmate on the pretext that he would use it to decorate the walls of his cell (Henry, 2011).

Common patterns based on different culturally specific cues are seen across many forms of deception. For example, Pearce (2011) classifies tourist scams into categories comprising tourist service scams, general retail scams, and social interaction scams. However, he states that:

“Tourist scams exist in many countries and while the forms differ outwardly, it will be suggested that the principles of exploiting tourists are similar.” (Pearce, 2011, p. 147)

Michalko (2003) provides evidence from Hungary suggesting that tourists from some nationalities are probably less cautious in their behavior than tourists from other countries. He analyzed the nationalities of crime victims in Hungary and found that German and Austrian tourists were more likely to be burglary victims compared to tourists from neighboring Eastern European countries. Michalko's explanation for such differences is two-fold: tourists from the Western Europe are more affluent making them better targets but they may also be more careless since they are less used to the high levels of crime still persisting in some Eastern European nations.

Pearce (2011) describes various types of tourist scams, to which non-local cultures are highly vulnerable, including:

- Tuk tuk (a local form of transport) operators, guides, and accommodation owners directing tourists into the shops of associates.
- One of the situations reported on the site [www.BangkokScam.com](http://www.BangkokScam.com) involves tourists renting jet skis in the resort of Pattaya. The criminal activity consists of the operators pointing to damage to the jet skis when they are returned and demanding restitution to the equivalent value of US \$250. If the tourists are unwilling to pay then the operators become physically intimidating and may call the police who are able to "negotiate" a settlement for a lesser but still palpably unwarranted amount of approximately US \$175.
- Cash confusions: Payment in an unfamiliar currency can lead to a suggestion that the tourist pay in cash US dollars or Euros and receive change in the same currency, thus saving on exchange rate conversions. The notes in US dollars or Euros which the hustler holds are counterfeit so all change from larger notes becomes a profit.

- Taxis not using meters properly add extra or false amounts to bill. Can include charges for tolls, parking, waiting time, baggage handling, claims of different fees for foreigners, added taxes, etc.
- Using the large numbers associated with local currency to provide the wrong change.

Innovative deception can be applied in a bi-directional manner -- by perpetrators of crimes as well as by law enforcement. In 2013, Belgian police conducted an operation against a notorious Somali pirate (McDonald-Gibson, 2013; O’Keeffe, 2013; Reuters Staff, 2013). Mohamed Abdi Hassan, also known as ‘Afweyne’ and ‘Big Mouth’ was a pirate kingpin described by the U.N. as “one of the most notorious and influential leaders” of a major Somali pirate organization that was responsible for hijacking dozens of commercial vessels and holding their crews ransom from 2008 to 2013, including in 2009, the Belgian dredger ship Pompei and its crew of nine. Prosecutors decided to involve Belgian undercover agents and the ruse of a fictional film production company after it became clear that an international arrest warrant would not be successful in capturing Afweyne or his men. After patiently starting a relationship of trust with Hassan’s right-hand-man, known as Tiiceey, and through him another direct relationship with Afweyne (which took several months) both agreed to participate as advisers on a film about piracy that was to portray Afweyne’s life carrying out hijackings off the East African coast and making millions of dollars from ransom payments. However, when the pair arrived at Brussels airport for a meeting with the film production company to sign their contracts, they were arrested.

## ***Japanese Hanko Fraud***

Although identity theft and fraudulent banking is widespread across the world (e.g., Withers, 2021), Japan's culture gives rise to a culturally-specific instantiation that is not seen anywhere elsewhere in the world.

For over 2000 years, Japanese officials have used a system of circular stamps impressed with red cinnabar paste as an official means to verify their identity and authorize transactions. The general public's use of such stamps as part of a national system dates back 150 years.

A hanko is a seal that is used in place of signatures on official documents. The stamp can be made of anything — from cheap, mass-produced plastic, to elaborate, handcrafted wood, bone, or other precious materials. Hanko are used as a means of identity and authentication on official paper documents, such as marriage certificates, house purchase transactions, banking transactions, signing off documents at work, or acknowledging delivery of an item.

As the Hanko employs a carved pattern to create the stamp, it is easy to copy and, unlike a handwritten signature, an owner can lose their Hanko or have it stolen.

“Investigators using modern forensic methods generally can distinguish which hanko made a particular imprint. Far more difficult, however, is proving that a given hand wielded the stamp. Unlike a signature, anyone can borrow your hanko and return it unnoticed.”

(Magnier, 2001)

In AD 887, Nobleman Fukumaro Oishi was banished from Japanese society for making a counterfeit hanko. Hanko fraud has proliferated into the current day. According to Magnier (2001), families have discovered ancestral homes sold out from under them. Elderly Japanese have found bank accounts cleaned out by a trusted nurse. In a few cases, wives have even awoken to find themselves no longer married. In 2004, police reported a 50 percent jump over a

seven year period in crimes involving seals and account books (Negishi, 2004). And according to the Japanese Bankers Association, in 2002, there were 1,294 reported cases in which people were robbed of their deposits — worth some 4.1 billion yen (\$35M) — after their stamps or passbooks containing copies of their stamp marks were stolen.

It is also common for people to forget to bring their Hanko as a form of identity, and this excuse can also enable various forms of fraud. For example, in January 2022, an elderly Tokyo woman was robbed of 30 million yen (over \$260,000) in gold by somebody who claimed to be a banking official who had forgotten his Hanko (Tanaka, 2022).

The Hanko and paper-based documentation are deeply ingrained within Japanese culture and there is dogged resistance to changing the system. To combat fraud, there have been various attempts to develop Hanko with built-in security measures, such as adding a two-digit dial that creates a series of marks around the printed name, making it difficult for an unauthorized person to copy someone's stamp (Frauenfelder, 2010).

However, during the global COVID-19 pandemic, the requirement to work from home made document authentication extremely difficult for many workers who did not have access to Hanko that were located in offices. As a result, the Japanese government has begun to relax restrictions on electronic signatures (Reuters, 2020) and many of the larger banks have now moved to fully digital identity authentication (Hagiwara, 2019).

### **Navigating Innovative Deception in the Future**

Returning to the questions posed near the beginning of this chapter, the motivators, overarching goals, and underlying strategies enabling deception appear to transcend culture. Cultural specificity arises in the form of the patterns that a deceiver presents to their target,

leading them to erroneously make sense of a situation to the deceiver's benefit. For example, drug smugglers repackage their products to resemble other substances or items congruent with their culture.

Most cases of deception replicate the strategies and methods of previous cases. Such recurrence suggests widespread social learning and mimicry. New cases may involve innovative adaptations of others' strategies and methods based on local circumstances, opportunities, or constraints.

Entirely original forms of deception appear relatively rare. Such innovation seems to arise due to unique circumstances, newly discovered opportunities, and the adoption of new methods, processes, or capabilities (such as new technologies). Creating new forms of deception relies upon close observation of the environment, insight, creativity, and lateral thinking.

Further, deception can fulfill malevolent, benevolent, and even altruistic ends. For example, deception delivers benefits in fields including medicine, education, art, film, music, sports, literature, etc. Cultural specificity arises in cases of deception within these fields.

Moreover, there are numerous domains where culture will increasingly have an impact on both deception and counter-deception, including, but not limited to, cyber and social media, political deception, military deception, economic deception, espionage, journalism and fake news, and electoral influences. For instance, COVID-19 mis- and disinformation<sup>2</sup> has sometimes encompassed culture-specific content, such as claims about miraculous powers of cow urine to cure the virus (Indian origin; Sahoo, 2020) or how drinking bleach can cure the virus (US origin; Putterman, 2020). In addition to the spread of such fake news, it may be important to expand our attention to the creators of false claims, in addition to amplifiers. Using deception to mislead, lie,

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.poynter.org/ifcn-covid-19-misinformation/?search\\_terms=](https://www.poynter.org/ifcn-covid-19-misinformation/?search_terms=)

discredit or induce doubt/suspicion/paranoia in the wake of a global pandemic is catastrophic and we need to mitigate its spread. To do so, we need to understand more about its emergence across the world.

The socioeconomic consequences of unchecked innovative deception are likely to be dire. Future work in this area can review the interplay of culture, deception, and innovation across domains such as international diplomacy, military conflict, magic, scams, trade, and the like. Academic applications in this area can focus on adopting experimental paradigms to study deceptiveness and innovation beyond lying, perhaps by recruiting specialized samples or by devising more realistic tasks requiring deception. Last, from a theoretical perspective, research can explore frameworks to highlight how cultural dimensions impact different aspects of formulating and executing deception, particularly in novel contexts.

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