

Tactics of political lying

The Iguanas affair

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Political lying recurrently becomes a major issue in the media. Audience members seldom have first-hand information and hence rely on media stories to assess claims. Although background information may not be available, the tactics used by key players are more likely to be reported. Two models for analysing tactics are introduced, one based on methods of deception, detection and response, the other based on methods to reduce or increase outrage over something perceived to be wrong. Each model is applied to claims and counter-claims concerning the behaviour of two Australian politicians. Most of the tactics used in the case study fit the deception-detection-response model, but some do not; the outrage management model overcomes these limitations: nearly all tactics used fit into the model's categories. Media audiences, by being aware of likely tactics, can better judge whether lying is involved.

Keywords: lying; deception; politicians; detection; tactics; outrage

1. Introduction

The events occurred on the evening of Friday 6 June 2008 at the Iguanas Water-front Bar in Gosford, New South Wales, north of Sydney, Australia. Two Labor politicians — Belinda Neal, the local member of federal parliament, and her husband John Della Bosca, NSW Education Minister — and several staff and friends were having dinner. This much is agreed by everyone. What happened afterwards, and became a political scandal, was hotly contested, with contrary claims. To most observers, it seemed that someone was lying.

Most members of the public who learned about these events did so via television, radio or newspaper reports. How were they to make sense of contested claims in the media when alleged lying was involved? I propose here that it can be useful to focus on tactics used by key players in the struggle over credibility, such as public denials, casting aspersions on the other side or referring matters to the police. Media stories often describe such tactics, which can be used to analyse the

events as a strategic engagement and assess which side's behaviour is most characteristic of deception.

Paul Ekman (1985), a leading expert on the practicalities of lying, found that few people can reliably detect lying, even though many think they can (see also Miller & Stiff 1993, 68–101). However, with training to recognise micro-expressions — fleeting hints of emotions — in people's faces, it is possible to dramatically improve detection of lying (Ekman 1985, 2003). Similarly, by learning to recognise the tactics commonly found in political lying, there is a prospect of making more informed judgements about who is lying and when. This paper is a preliminary exploration of this possibility.

To explore tactics of political lying, two different models are presented and applied to the Iguanas affair — the case of alleged lying involving the politicians Belinda Neal and John Della Bosca — in order to compare their usefulness. In the next two sections, I describe the context of political lying and provide an overview of the Iguanas affair. Then I present a three-stage model covering methods of deception, detection and response, and apply it to the affair. Following this, I present a different model, built around tactics for reducing or increasing outrage over lying, and apply it to the Iguanas case, and compare the two models. In the conclusion, I point out the challenge of making sense of confrontations over political lying and the value of paying attention to tactics.

2. Political lying

Although lying occurs in all occupations, lying by politicians can attract special attention, for various reasons: because supporters and voters put such a stake in the election and performance of politicians, because political success depends heavily on credibility, because allegations of lying are powerful tools against political opponents, and because politicians are public figures whose behaviour, including alleged lying, regularly receives media coverage. Whether politicians actually lie more frequently than anyone else has seldom been investigated. Critics commonly attack the credibility of politicians whose views they dislike — George W. Bush was a favourite target during his presidency (e.g. Corn 2003) — but the partisanship involved may lead to a distorted view of the prevalence and significance of lying. In a broader and less partisan analysis, Alterman (2004) examined the harmful consequences of policy deceptions by several US presidents. Cliffe et al. (2000) examine secrecy and lying in US and British politics, with special attention to the damage lying can do to democratic decision-making.

Political lying refers to lying by politicians or other figures in the political arena that is socially significant. Lies that are private and remain private, whether

by politicians or others, do not count as political lies by this definition. A lie, to be a political lie, needs to enter the public domain.

Political lying can be classified in various ways, including by motivation, credibility, consequences and mode of delivery. For example, motivations for lying include reasons of state (such as national security), seeking political advantage for one's party, and hiding damaging information about oneself or allies. For the analysis here, it is useful to distinguish three situations in which lying can become an issue for politicians.

Lies in office. Examples include Hitler's lies at Munich about his commitment to peace, US President Eisenhower's lies about U2 spy aircraft over the Soviet Union, and lies under the Bush administration about government practices of rendition and torture as part of the war on terror.

Breaking campaign promises. In 1988, during the US presidential election campaign, candidate George H. W. Bush made a memorable promise: "Read my lips. No new taxes." After he became president and agreed to tax increases, this promise came back to haunt him. According to some definitions, breaking campaign promises does not qualify as deception, because there may be no intent to deceive. Nevertheless, political opponents often treat broken campaign promises as lies and use the alleged lying as a weapon against elected politicians. For example, Julia Gillard, Australian Prime Minister 2010–2013, was repeatedly condemned for allegedly breaking her pre-election promise not to introduce a carbon tax, being labelled "Ju-liar" (Walsh 2013).

Politicised private lies. When politicians allegedly lie in relation to something in their private lives, this occasionally becomes a political issue. A common scenario is that political opponents — from a rival party or a politician's own party — gain access to potentially discrediting information and leak it to journalists whose stories turn what would normally be a private matter into a public issue. A famous instance was US President Bill Clinton's sexual involvement with Monica Lewinsky, in which Clinton's statement "I did not have sexual relations with that woman" was a public response to efforts by Clinton's opponents to discredit him. The Iguanas affair falls into this category of politicised private lies.

These examples illustrate the overlap between the roles in which politicians can lie. A campaigning lie can spill over into lies in office; lies in office can affect the course of campaigns, as in the Watergate affair; and private lies occasionally become public affairs (Jay 2010, 175–180).

Much of the attention to political lying is concerned with whether lying has actually occurred, or who is telling the truth and who is lying, with attention on the details of who knew what when. Examples include the 1933 Reichstag fire, attributed by the Nazis to their opponents, whereas communists and others blamed the Nazis themselves (Tobias 1964); the Tonkin Gulf incident in 1964, used as

a trigger for justifying expanding US military involvement in the Vietnam war (Alterman 2004; Moise 1996); and the children overboard affair, used to mobilise public alarm about illegal immigrants during the 2001 Australian federal election campaign (Marr & Wilkinson 2003).

John Mearsheimer (2011), in an important analysis of lying by government leaders, argues that lying in international affairs is far less common than commonly thought. Despite providing many examples of leaders telling falsehoods, he says these are the exception rather than the rule. His attention is on what are called here “lies in office,” in particular ones intended to serve the state rather than a politician’s personal interest, dividing them into five main types: lying between states, fear-mongering, strategic cover-ups, nationalist myths and liberal lies. Mearsheimer does not assume lying is necessarily bad, saying it is often in support of a good cause, though well-intentioned lies sometimes turn out to be counterproductive.

For a wider perspective on political lying, it is useful to look at studies of lying more generally, which include evolutionary, historical, military, philosophical and psychological perspectives, among others (Ariely 2012; Latimer 2001; Lewis & Saarni 1993; Martin 2009; Miller & Stiff 1993; Rue 1994). Ekman (1985, 41) defines lying as “a deliberate choice to mislead a target without giving any notification of the intent to do so.” This includes both telling falsehoods and withholding the truth, the latter sometimes called lying by omission. Ekman’s definition — used here — captures what is more widely understood as deception.

A traditional concern in many discussions about lying is ethics, with the most common view being that lying is usually a bad thing and that people should strive to tell the truth, except in exceptional circumstances (Bok 1978). A different view is that lying is necessary and indeed often valuable in everyday life (Bailey 1991; Barnes 1994; Ford 1996; Nyberg 1993; Robinson 1996; Shulman 2007; Wolk & Henley 1970). An everyday example is when a friend asks, “How do I look?” It is usually harmless to say “You look great,” whereas telling the brutal truth would damage the relationship for no apparent benefit. According to this view, deceptions are far more commonplace and functional than normally realised.

It is possible to distinguish two types of lies, benign and malign. Benign lies include thanking a friend for a nice meal, telling a dying person their life was worthwhile, and telling an assassin that their target took the road south. Malign lies range from intentionally hurtful comments to deceptions for extorting money or leading others to death. In practice, many lies fall between benign and malign, sometimes with a diversity of impacts on different people.

Another contrast is between individual and institutional lies. Individual lies are at the interpersonal level, involving two or several people. Institutional lies are at the level of organisations or public discourse.

These perspectives help to put political lying in context. Many politicians use the common interpretation that telling a falsehood is lying whereas concealing or distorting the truth is not, leading to tortuous statements that technically avoid falsehoods but are certainly deceptive. When political lies are contested, as they often are, whether they are benign or malign depends on who is making the judgement. Lies in office and during campaigning are necessarily institutional: they are in the public domain. In contrast, private lies by politicians are individual lies, but they can become institutional lies when they are brought into the public domain — as in the Iguanas affair.

I chose the Iguanas affair as a case study for several reasons. First, as a public event it was restricted in time and location: it was a prominent news item for a few weeks but after that received only occasional comment; most of the coverage occurred in the Australian state of New South Wales. Second, it involved only two politicians and just a few other individuals. Finally, it was singular event, not embedded in long-running political disputes or ideologies. In summary, the affair was significant enough to generate many news stories, with ample information about tactics, but sufficiently contained and straightforward to make analysis possible using different models of political lying.

3. Night at the Iguanas

Belinda Neal, John Della Bosca and a few of their staff and friends were having dinner on 6 June 2008 at the Iguanas Waterfront Bar. At 9.00pm the restaurant was converted to a dance club; diners were asked to move to other tables. Floor supervisor Tom Crocker asked the group to move. A dispute developed over whether a new table was ready. What happened next is disputed: there are two main accounts.

According to staff at the restaurant (Silmalis & Chesterton 2008), Neal became abusive towards Crocker, calling him “ignorant” and “a liar” among other terms. Daniel Richardson, a waiter, heard the commotion and came to the table. He says Neal said to him “You are nothing more than a little idiot.” Jared Golla, operations manager, then came to the table. He says Neal demanded that Crocker be fired for rudeness. Golla walked to his office and Neal followed into the staff-only area. Golla alleges Neal said, “I will have your fucking licence,” “What’s your fucking name?” and “I will have the fucking police down here every weekend to close you down,” among other statements. Golla told Neal she should leave, otherwise he would call the police. At about this point, Della Bosca joined the encounter, telling Golla he shouldn’t call the police. Neal allegedly said, “I don’t care if you call the police. Don’t you know who I am?” There was a subsequent encounter, in the car

park as Neal and Della Bosca left the restaurant, between them and general manager Steve Twitchin. Several of the staff believed Neal was intoxicated.

According to Neal, Della Bosca and most of their party, the fault lay entirely with the staff. They say Neal had only two or three glasses of wine and did not swear.

Given two divergent accounts of the night at the Iguanas, most commentators assumed at least one side was lying. There was a lot of interest in determining what actually happened, thereby exposing lies. However, my aim here is different. I am not concerned with what actually happened or even with who might or might not have been lying, but with the dynamics of the encounter, namely the tactics used in claims and counterclaims about lying.

To begin the analysis, there is a decision to be made: should the starting point be (alleged) deception by Neal and Della Bosca or by the Iguanas staff? I choose here to focus on Neal and Della Bosca, because my focus is on political lying and because the bulk of commentary and hence most of the evidence is from this angle. A parallel analysis could be made from the starting point that Iguanas staff were lying.

A sequence of key events is given in Table 1 (drawing on “Key developments in the Iguanas scandal,” Australian Associated Press, 10 July 2008. See also “On the waterfront,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 September 2008).

Table 1. Key events in the Iguanas affair

6 June 2008: Belinda Neal, John Della Bosca and friends have dinner at the Iguanas Waterfront Bar. Following an altercation, six Iguanas staff sign statutory declarations saying Neal and Della Bosca swore and threatened them (Silmalis 2008).
7 June: Della Bosca says reports about what happened are “nonsense” (“NSW: Six staff sign stat decs against Labor couple,” Australian Associated Press, 7 June).
8 June: Steve Twitchin, Iguanas general manager, makes an apology to Neal and Della Bosca (Hall & Bibby 2008).
10 June: Four statutory declarations from dining companions of Neal and Della Bosca, saying the couple was blameless, are released by Della Bosca’s office (McDougall et al. 2008).
11 June: Claims are revealed that Neal had kicked an opponent in a soccer match. Prime Minister Kevin Rudd tells Neal to have counselling for her behaviour (Norington & Franklin 2008).
12 June: NSW Police begin investigating the conflicting accounts in the statutory declarations (Lawrence 2008).
13 June: After the news that Della Bosca had written the apology issued by Twitchin, NSW Premier Morris Iemma suspends Della Bosca from his ministerial position (Salusinszky 2008).
17 June: Speaking in state parliament, Della Bosca gives his position on the Iguanas matter (“I drank nothing but mineral water,” ABC News, 17 June 2008). Melissa Batten, a staffer in Neal’s office and one of those dining with Neal and Della Bosca on 6 June, resigns.

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued)

19 June: Batten, in a paid interview on Channel Nine television, says she was under pressure to omit details from her statutory declaration.

1 July: Police announce that Neal and Della Bosca have not agreed to be interviewed about the Iguanas matter (Hall 2008; Welch & Smith 2008). Della Bosca agrees to be interviewed following a call from Iemma.

2 July: Neal agrees to be interviewed.

3 July: Police interview Neal and Della Bosca (Norington & Hall 2008).

3 September: The Commonwealth and NSW Departments of Public Prosecution say there is insufficient evidence to lay charges against Neal or Della Bosca (Coorey & Welch 2008; Norington & Maiden 2008).

4. Deception, detection and response

The first model for analysing political lying has three components: deception, detection and response. In a basic scenario, someone attempts to deceive others, who then attempt to detect and confirm either the truth or that deception occurred, or both. Finally there is a response to the deception.

This model draws on ideas from a range of authors, boiling them down to a simple set of components suitable for applying to the Iguanas affair. Several authors have categorised types of deception. For example, Nyberg (1993) lists eight types of deception, such as promoting false belief, maintaining false belief and ending belief in a truth. Ekman (1985) gives several ways to lie — such as concealing, falsifying, misdirecting and falsely identifying what caused an emotion — and gives 38 questions to ask about the lie, the liar and the lie-catcher. Galasinski (2000) describes techniques of evasion and misrepresenting of prior communications as demonstrated in televised political debates. Jamieson (1992) describes tactics of attack in US political campaigning advertisements, such as misleading juxtaposition of images, and methods of countering attacks.

Research on interpersonal lying is also relevant. Erving Goffman pioneered the study of individual encounters, including ones in which one person has something to hide. The moves in this game of concealment, revealing and misrepresentation are tactics of deception and detection (Goffman 1970). There has been extensive study into methods of detecting lies (Vrij 2008). In relation to political lying, the chief limitation of this work is the absence of a public dimension to the deception-and-detection game.

To divide the dynamics of political lying into deception, detection and response is a simplification of the invariably messy interactions that occur in politics and elsewhere. It is a first step, and can be revised if it does not fit actual cases.

Each of the three parts — deception, detection and response — can be broken down in various ways, for example in terms of motives or persuasiveness. The focus here is on the methods used. Methods are more readily observable than motives or persuasiveness, and even when methods are not directly observable, it is usually easier to reach agreement about which methods have been used.

Table 2 distinguishes three main methods of deception: hiding, misleading and framing.

Table 2. Methods of deception

1. Hiding
– cover-up: organisational secrecy; destruction of documents
– not volunteering the truth (often called lying by omission); evasion (Galasinski 2000)
– occupational secrecy (e.g. police codes of silence)
– submersion of key points in an overload of information
2. Misleading
– telling falsehoods; misleading information; disinformation; spin-doctoring (e.g. Jamieson 1992)
– using language with built-in assumptions (Poole 2006)
– black operations, namely actions designed to disguise or give a false impression of perpetrators (on agents provocateurs who use false identities to incite damaging behaviours, see Lubbers 2012)
3. Deceptive framing
– agenda setting
– news routines and news values (Weaver 1994)
– ideology, worldview; “basic lies” (false assumptions supporting the social order: Bailey 1991)
– arena transfer (e.g. from public discussion to courts)

Political deception, according to this classification of methods, can occur through hiding information, through delivery of misleading information and through encouraging others to use a frame or lens that leads to a distorted way of understanding what is going on. For example, the plight of the unemployed can be hidden by not collecting statistics, not publishing them or not mentioning them. Methods of misleading people about unemployment include giving incorrect figures or using a misleading definition of employment, such as counting working one hour per week as employed (Best 2001). Deceptive methods of framing unemployment include focussing on the booming economy or assuming a certain level of unemployment is natural.

Individual politicians can use only some of the methods in any of the categories of hiding, misleading, and framing. A political party or movement, or compliant police or media, may have the capacity to deploy or influence some of the methods requiring coordinated action, such as organisational secrecy, black operations, and agenda setting.

There can be overlaps and synergies between the methods of hiding, misleading and framing. For example, a politician may hide information or tell lies as a means of influencing media agendas and connecting with news values. In applying the model to actual cases it may not always be possible to conclusively adjudicate between types of deception.

In the face of potential deception, others need to determine whether deception is occurring. It is convenient to classify methods of detection into three categories. See Table 3.

Table 3. Methods of detecting deception

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- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Assess the speaker | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assess the track record of the speaker – evaluate motives and incentives – use behavioural clues (Ekman 1985; Vrij 2008) |
| 2. Uncover and analyse the evidence | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assess whether the evidence has been a reliable indicator previously – expose conflicting claims and statements – clarify key points and concepts – compare with other views; undertake research – test veracity (individually): check facts, obtain statistics – test veracity (collectively): get a group together to bring out suppressed information and perspectives; cultivate whistleblowers, leakers, internal sympathisers, investigative journalists |
| 3. Assess history and context | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – assess past circumstances for their correlation with lying – assess incentives for lying provided by the context, for example money or reprisals – look at environmental clues concerning deception, for example patterns of collusion |
-

In politics, different individuals have different levels of credibility, deserved or otherwise. A politician with a reputation for honesty can, ironically, more easily get away with lying, but exposure can lead to a loss of credibility. Commentators and voters are less likely to believe a politician with a reputation for lying, especially when there is a high incentive to deceive.

The core activity in detecting deception is obtaining and assessing evidence. This is a central feature of much journalism as well as academic research oriented to political issues. It is relatively straightforward to detect and challenge cover-ups and misleading statements. Challenging deceptive framing sometimes requires in-depth study and understanding of the issues. To appreciate whether current debates about unemployment are deceptive, it is valuable to understand the changing nature of employment and the associated political economy, as well as the ways that groups hide, disguise or use unemployment as a debating point.

Having detected deception, Table 4 lists various ways to respond, divided here into three categories focusing respectively on the speaker, the evidence and the context.

Table 4. Responses to possible deception

1. Obtain insurance against deception by the speaker
– pinpoint claims;
– reduce deniability: get it in writing, on oath or public statements
– obtain deceit insurance: financial, reputational or other commitments to truth-telling
– involve many people
– assign responsibility: don't allow displacement
2. Validate the evidence
– use more assessment, new sources and new research methods to avoid being deceived
– challenge claims, to put the onus on others to provide stronger evidence
– make counterclaims: present own evidence, views and alternative perspectives, again to put the onus on others to provide stronger evidence
– take collective action
3. Protect: change the context
– disengage from interactions with possible deceivers
– don't reveal knowledge of deception: allow face-saving exit and/or enable better detection
– choose win-win methods: find ways of behaving that benefit everyone whether or not deception is occurring

The responses relating to the speaker are aimed at making deception by this speaker less likely or less effective. The approaches relating to evidence focus on making it easier to detect deceptive claims and being prepared to counter them. The approaches relating to context are varied. They include avoiding the speaker, using but not revealing knowledge of deception, and figuring out ways to proceed that are effective whether or not deception is occurring.

Tables 2, 3 and 4 give an indication of the enormous number of methods potentially involved in encounters involving deception. It would be possible to elaborate on or debate many of the points in the tables. However, a model with a myriad of categories and subcategories has limited value in showing regularities and patterns. This model has nine main categories: three categories for each of deception, detection and response. This is a suitable degree of complexity for the later comparison with the backfire framework, which has ten main categories. The dot points in Tables 2, 3 and 4 give illustrations of actual methods, without being exhaustive. This is enough detail for proceeding to the next step: seeing how the model works on the Iguanas case.

5. Applying the deception-detection-response model

Various methods of deception, detection and response can be identified in the Iguanas case.

5.1 Methods of deception

Many of the actions or non-actions by Neal, Della Bosca and their supporters fit into the categories of hiding, misleading or framing listed in Table 2. Neal and Della Bosca did not initially make any statement about what had happened at the Iguanas: this could be interpreted as hiding, though it could also be due to not initially treating the matter as worthy of comment. After media attention, they denied swearing and blamed problems on Iguanas staff. Two days later, Iguanas general manager Steve Twitchin issued an apology. Later, media reported that Della Bosca had threatened legal action for defamation and had written the text of Twitchin's apology. However, Della Bosca had not revealed either his legal threat or writing of the apology. Della Bosca's office released four statutory declarations in his and Neal's support but did not mention the existence of three others (Welch et al. 2008).

Della Bosca told the media he had not broken any law. Outrage about Neal and Della Bosca's behaviour primarily concerned their making of threats and being arrogant, neither of which is against the law. According to a *Canberra Times* comment ("The Neal affair," 12 June 2008), "There are few sins greater in public life than saying, 'Don't you know who I am?'" In this context, Della Bosca's reference to law can be classified as deceptive framing. See Table 5.

Table 5. Methods of deception in the Iguanas case

<i>Hiding</i>	
	Threats to sue not revealed
	Writing of Twitchin's apology not revealed
	Some statutory declarations withheld
<i>Misleading</i>	
	Denial of actions at Iguanas; blaming staff
<i>Framing</i>	
	Della Bosca saying no law was broken

5.2 Methods of detection

The statutory declarations by Iguanas staff provided the original basis for believing something had happened and that Neal and Della Bosca's version was incorrect. Supplementing the statutory declarations was videotape from Iguanas security cameras showing, for example, Neal following Golla to the restaurant's staff-only area and showing Della Bosca standing close to Twitchin with his finger in Twitchin's face.

Attention was quickly directed to motives for lying. The Iguanas staff apparently did not have a motive for writing statutory declarations about a concocted incident — except that the person who witnessed the declarations, Chris Spence, was a staff member for a Liberal member of parliament Chris Hartcher.

Media stories drew attention to other cases of lying by Neal and Della Bosca. A few months earlier, Sophie Mirabella, a Liberal member of the federal House of Representatives, pregnant at the time, claimed Neal had said “Your child will turn into a demon if you have such evil thoughts” during a session in parliament. Neal denied this. However, tapes of the session captured Neal making these very statements. Neal gave an apology the next day (Franklin 2008; Wil- lacy 2008). Della Bosca, having been caught speeding on several occasions, was set to lose his driver’s licence and said in NSW Parliament that he would not drive in the interim before the suspension was to take place. However, he drove away from the Iguanas, breaking his promise. (He claimed it was necessary to avoid Twitchin, who was threatening. Note that breaking a promise may or may not count as lying.)

An incident involving Neal kicking a soccer opponent was raised as indicat- ing a pattern of bad behaviour, specifically losing her temper, which is what was alleged to have occurred at the Iguanas.

Eight female members of parliament signed an open letter saying the focus on Neal was sexist because male MPs regularly were abusive but did not receive such intense media attention (Wilson 2008), an issue raised earlier within the Labor Party (“Gillard denies Neal’s treatment sexist,” ABC News, 12 June). This could be considered a separate issue from the Iguanas incident. For the purposes of detect- ing deception, such side issues need to be avoided, and that is what happened on this occasion: the claims by the female MPs received only a short run in the media. See Table 6 for a summary of methods used to detect deception.

Table 6. Methods of detecting deception in the Iguanas case

<i>Assess the speaker</i>
Neal’s track record of lying and other bad behaviour
<i>Obtain and assess evidence</i>
Statutory declarations
Security-television footage
Compare claims and actions
<i>Assess history and context</i>
Keep focus on lying (avoid the side issue of sexism)

5.3 Responses to deception

Neal and Della Bosca initially said nothing publicly about the affair. However, media and public pressure for a response became intense. Della Bosca initially dismissed the claims by Iguanas staff and then sought and received an apology. However, three of the junior staff refused to back down from their statutory dec- larations, keeping the issue alive. The expectation was that the leader of the Labor Party — Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in the case of Neal and NSW Premier Morris

Iemma in the case of Della Bosca — would take action. Rudd acted quickly: he told Neal to undergo counselling. Rudd also made a carefully worded statement, obviously aimed at Neal, that no one was guaranteed a future in politics.

Iemma initially refused to act in relation to Della Bosca, then — after Della Bosca’s role in drafting the apology was revealed — stood him down from his ministerial position. State opposition leader Barry O’Farrell referred the matter of conflicting statutory declarations to the NSW Police.

Neal and Della Bosca had each stated in parliament that they would cooperate fully with the police investigation. However, they declined to present themselves to the police for interviews: they interpreted “cooperate fully” as making a written statement. However, others interpreted their promise as including an interview. Media and public pressure became so great that eventually they gave interviews. See Table 7 for a summary of methods used to respond to deception.

Table 7. Methods of responding to deception in the Iguanas case

<i>Obtain insurance against deception by the speaker</i>
Demand explanations
Demand police interviews
<i>Validate the evidence</i>
Police interviews with staff
<i>Protect: change the context</i>
Implied threat to disendorse Neal

Quite a number of the tactics used in the Iguanas case nicely fit the deception-detection-response model. The events can be conceptualised as an encounter concerning a lie, namely how to maintain it, how to detect it and how to respond to it. Yet several features of the case do not fit this framework so well.

One complication is retractions: they are neither deception nor detection. They could be considered a response to lying, but the rationale for Twitchin’s retraction is not built into the framework.

A second complication is new players who support or challenge the claims by the initial contending parties. New players fit into the model when they aid in deception or detection, such as Neal and Della Bosca’s dining companions who made statements in their support. But what about new players who try to move the issue in a different direction, such as Rudd’s referral of Neal to counselling, an apparent attempt to defuse the issue? This can be included in the category of response, but this means quite a lot of activity needs to be conceptualised as “response,” including some by the allies of the initial deceivers.

Then there is the role of new lies, either to cover up or bolster original lies or to challenge them. New lies don’t easily fit into the model except again as a form of response or as a new engagement.

Finally, formal procedures, such as the involvement of the police, don't easily fit the framework at least in so far as they are used to offer judgments or exculpations. The decision by the police not to proceed with criminal charges could be interpreted as a response to lying, but there's another dimension: the police decision affected others' assessments of the significance of what happened.

These limitations of the deception-detection-response model can, in part, be attributed to its isomorphism with interpersonal deception and detection. At the interpersonal level this framework works well but when many players become involved, limitations of the model become apparent.

6. The backfire model: Managing outrage

The second model used here to analyse tactics of political lying is based on observed patterns of tactics used to manage outrage caused by actions or policies perceived as unfair. When a powerful group or individual attacks a weaker opponent, or in some other way violates a social norm, this can be perceived as unfair and outrage some observers. This is especially the case for governments: Moore (1978) argues that subjects implicitly expect rulers to provide certain protections in return for granting them power and that certain violations by rulers, for example failure to provide security or taking advantage of their position, can cause a feeling of injustice. Therefore, governments and other powerful perpetrators have an incentive to manage outrage.

Analysis of a wide range of actions potentially perceived as unjust — including censorship (Jansen & Martin 2003), sexual harassment (McDonald et al. 2010), massacres (Gray & Martin 2008) and bombing of civilians (Riddick 2012) — shows that perpetrators commonly use five methods that reduce outrage:

- cover up the action
- devalue the target
- reinterpret the events, including by lying, minimising consequences, blaming and framing
- use official channels to give an appearance of justice
- intimidate or bribe people involved.

There are five corresponding methods that can increase outrage:

- expose the action
- validate the target (and devalue the perpetrator)
- interpret the events as unjust

- avoid official channels; instead, mobilise support
- resist and expose intimidation and bribery.

This is called the backfire model (Martin 2007): if the methods of reducing outrage fail, the action can backfire on the perpetrator, namely be counterproductive. It can also be called the outrage management model (McDonald, Graham & Martin 2010). The application of the model to lying is straightforward: in many circumstances, lying is seen as inappropriate, even reprehensible — especially malign lying — and hence likely to cause an adverse reaction. Liars have an incentive to minimise this sort of reaction and hence can benefit by using methods of reducing outrage.

Note that the model deals with tactics for *managing outrage* over alleged or perceived deception, not directly with tactics of deception, detection and response, which address alleged lying itself rather than reactions to it. In practice, there is an overlap between the ways tactics are addressed by the two models. For example, cover-up, a method of reducing outrage, can also be a method of deception itself. On the other hand, intimidation, a method in the backfire model for reducing outrage, has no obvious counterpart in the framework of deception, detection and response. The backfire model thus is a different way of classifying tactics, with some overlaps with and some differences from the model of deception, detection and response.

7. Applying the backfire model

In the Iguanas affair, Neal and Della Bosca were widely perceived as having done two things that could generate outrage. The first was behaving in an arrogant, bullying fashion, using their political positions in an inappropriate way; the second was lying about what they had done. This is typical of political lies: both what is lied about and the lie itself potentially can cause concern and resentment in audiences.

To see whether the backfire model can help make sense of the Iguanas affair, the actions by Neal, Della Bosca and supporters need to be fitted into the five categories of reducing outrage and the actions by their critics into the five categories of increasing outrage. See Table 8.

It is apparent from Table 8 that many of the actions in the affair can be classified as means of managing outrage. There are several strengths of the model for this case.

The model predicts that use of official channels will dampen concern. This is what happened in practice. After the police investigation began, interest was

Table 8. Methods of reducing or increasing outrage in the Iguanas affair

Reducing outrage	Increasing outrage
<i>Cover-up</i>	<i>Exposure</i>
Threats to sue not revealed	Media coverage of the events, statutory declarations and Della Bosca's writing of apology
Writing of Twitchin's apology not revealed	
Some statutory declarations withheld	
<i>Devaluation</i>	<i>Validation and counter-devaluation</i>
Claim that Iguanas staff were abusive.	Lack of other evidence of abuse by Iguanas staff
Description of media treatment as a "beat-up"	Track record of lying and bad behaviour by Neal
<i>Reinterpretation</i>	<i>Interpretation as injustice</i>
Denial of inappropriate behaviour	Statutory declarations
Saying the affair was a trivial matter	Security-television footage
Saying no law was broken	Focusing on bad behaviour, not criminal actions
Saying the police had cleared them	
<i>Official channels</i>	<i>Mobilisation of support</i>
Expectation of action by Rudd and Iemma.	Media coverage
Referral to police	
Referral to the Independent Commission Against Corruption	
<i>Intimidation and bribery</i>	<i>Resistance</i>
Threats to sue	Three Iguanas staff refuse to withdraw their statutory declarations
Fear of losing restaurant licence	Golla continues to speak out
Dismissal of Golla from Iguanas (Cummings 2008)	

maintained by Neal and Della Bosca's apparent refusal to be interviewed, which can be interpreted as attempted cover-up that was challenged by media attention. However, after they were interviewed, there was little media coverage for two months: as predicted by the model, official channels reduced public concern. That the directors of public prosecution decided there was insufficient evidence to prosecute was simply the culmination of this process. Neal interpreted this as clearing her: "They found that I did nothing wrong" (Coorey & Welch 2008; Norington & Maiden 2008). Letter-writers ("Lack of evidence does not equate to political propriety," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 September 2008; Benson 2008) pointed out that the main issue was about inappropriate behaviour, not illegal behaviour, but this did not put the issue back on the agenda.

The model allows for new players. They simply contribute to the tactics on each side. Similarly, new lies are simply additional tactics, fitting in one of the categories.

The phenomenon most difficult to classify is retractions. They might be considered attempts at cover-up, except that the original statement already notified audiences that something was going on. So they are best classified as a form of reinterpretation.

The backfire framework thus appears to capture much of the dynamics of the Iguanas encounter, including features not readily addressed by the deception-detection-response framework. In the end, the affair seems to have backfired on Della Bosca and Neal. It hurt Della Bosca's image and was cited as a factor in his not becoming premier of New South Wales. It was a factor in the decision by Neal's Labor Party branch to choose a different candidate for the next election (Benns 2010).

8. Conclusion

The Iguanas affair was self-contained and thus provides a useful test case for models for analysing the tactics of political lying. The first model, involving deception, detection, and response, highlights the many ways of accomplishing each of these stages in an encounter over alleged deception. Many of the features of the Iguanas story fit this model, but there are several things not easily incorporated, especially retractions, new players and official channels. The limitations of the deception-detection-response model in part derive from its origins in interpersonal deception and detection: political lying is necessarily a public matter, with the complications of multiple players and media coverage, and the collective dimensions are not easily fitted into a dyadic model.

The backfire or outrage-management model is built around methods for reducing or increasing public outrage over perceived unfairness. The model is able to incorporate most of the tactics used in the Iguanas affair concerning both the original events and the subsequent statements by players in the drama. The model is designed around collective processes and so has no trouble incorporating new players and different sequences of tactics. However, the backfire model doesn't highlight the detailed engagement over lying, especially how to deceive and how to detect deception, because the model's focus is on management of reactions, not techniques concerning the deception itself. For example, the backfire model has a category of cover-up because this is a way of reducing outrage, not because of a focus on methods of cover-up per se.

The deception-detection-response framework is most useful when investigating engagement over deception, whereas the backfire framework is most useful when investigating struggles over the response to an event potentially perceived as inappropriate — including deception.

Both models highlight the value of concentrating on tactics. This is a micro-level approach that helps in understanding both what people do and how their choices fit into a wider framework. It is possible to go one step further and note that people's choices tend to fall into patterns. Once Neal and Della Bosca decided, after their night at the Iguanas, not to make an apology — many commentators noted that a non-committal apology would have defused the affair — the pattern of tactics was fairly predictable.

It is not possible to know when political lying will become a major issue, but it is possible to predict the methods likely to be deployed when it does. Audiences, by focusing on tactics and understanding how they fit into patterns — deception, detection and response; reducing and increasing outrage — may be able to learn to assess patterns of behaviour and decide whether they are characteristic of those who are lying.

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