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For a Sociology of Deceit:

Doubled Identities, Interested Actions and Situational Logics of Opportunity

Chris Shilling

University of Kent, UK

Philip A. Mellor

University of Leeds, UK

Abstract

Deceit occupies a significant role in historical conceptualisations of social order, but dominant approaches to the subject are limited by the normative assumptions and conceptions of agency and structure on which they rest. This paper suggests that renewed sociological engagement with deceit is overdue and can illuminate the 'situational logics of opportunity' within modernity (Archer, 2010). Focusing on the contemporary era, and building upon Simmel's argument that individuals lead a 'doubled existence', within and outside social forms, we view deceit as neither a personal trait nor an effect of social structures. Instead, it emerges through, and assumes contrasting meanings as a consequence of, people's interested and strategic engagements with the social world. Developing this theoretical analysis substantively, we then focus on several examples of how deceit is used to subvert or reaffirm boundaries between 'insider' and 'outsider' groups, including those emergent from sociology's own 'doubled existence' relative to modern life.

Keywords: Deceit, 'Doubled' identities, Insider/outsider boundaries, Social order/change.

INTRODUCTION

Deceit has occupied a significant role in historical conceptualisations of societal order, with social thought typically adopting one of two approaches to the subject. First, deceit has been

interpreted as individual acts of misrepresentation or misdirection undertaken in order to induce in others a false understanding of a state of affairs, usually in pursuit of advantage or gain (Hamlin, 2005: 205). Second, sociological approaches sometimes viewed deceit as structurally or culturally generated obfuscation that misleads individuals about the 'real' conditions of their existence (Cohen, 2001). These approaches have produced interesting analyses of how deceit erodes, but also sometimes strengthens, the relations of trust that maintain socially beneficial or iniquitous relationships, but each contains residual categories. While the former struggles to explain those social conditions that promote or discourage deceitful action, the latter tends to gloss the variable motives and interactions of deceptive individuals.

Seeking to avoid these limitations, and focusing on its contemporary significance, this paper develops a distinctive analysis of deceit that can illuminate the contrasting avenues for advancement and control facilitated by modern patterns of social change. Theoretically, in accounting for how deceit occurs, we utilise Simmel's (1971 [1908a]) argument that individuals lead a 'doubled existence' within and outside social and cultural forms, with his associated focus on the proliferation of diverse forms in modernity sensitising us to how deceit's meanings can change radically between contexts. In assessing why deceit occurs, we also draw on Bourdieu's (1986) attentiveness to the interestedness of social behaviour. Instead of pursuing this through Bourdieu's own emphasis on habitual action and social reproduction, however, we view interestedness from the perspective of Archer's (2012) analysis of people's reflexive appraisals of, and strategic interactions within, the differentiated contexts in which modern social action occurs. Despite the theoretical differences separating Simmel, Bourdieu and Archer, these features of their work complement each other in illuminating the relationship between deceitful action and the multiple opportunity structures characteristic of contemporary life.

After outlining this distinctive approach towards deceit in the first half of the paper, we develop our analysis by examining how the meaning and significance of deceit can vary when deliberated upon and used to advance the interests of those seeking to subvert or affirm

'insider'/'outsider' boundaries. We do this by exploring the very different opportunities with which it is associated in the contrasting contexts associated with i) 'passing' in order to access social forms governed by identity norms, ii) governmental attempts to regulate and utilise deceit in advancing state interests and accumulating political capital, and iii) deception as an intellectual strategy. Here, having used sociological resources within our analysis, we assess the discipline's implication in deceit. Imprinted by modern life, sociology and social research are themselves reflective of 'doubled' existence: analysts are located within and outside social forms, and accumulate intellectual capital by manipulating research subjects and 'making society visible' in potentially contentious ways (Strathern, 2000: 312).

DECEIT AND SOCIAL ORDER

Deceit emerged as a sociological issue, in relation to the discipline's concern with the Hobbesian 'problem of order', as the undesirable 'other' to that trust viewed as integral to social stability. This was clear in Durkheim's (1984 [1893]) account of the pre-contractual foundations of modern societies, for example, and Parsons's (1991 [1951]) delineation of those norms that pattern individual choices. Whatever differences separated such analyses, their concern with order included a fear of deceit's corrosive influence tied to worries about the breakdown of trust in relation to tradition, habituation, and religious authority (Seligman, 1997). This focus may have neglected the importance of deceit within pre-modern societies evident, for example, in Elias's (1983) analysis of the intrigue central to court politics within the ancient regime. Nevertheless, it reflected an understandable concern that modern social differentiation both demanded of people an unprecedented 'leap of faith' if they were to invest in ostensibly secular norms conducive to the institutional coordination of social action (Luhmann, 1979: 32), yet also made available to them opportunities for deceitful actions that could destabilise society (Misztal, 1996).

The importance of such concerns was reflected in the development of two major theoretical approaches towards the subject. Hobbes's (1839: 36; 1840: 25) focus on the dangers of social life collapsing into violence exemplifies the first, individualistic framework.

For Hobbes, individuals are naturally prone to deception; a situation necessitating that sovereign political authorities institute coercive mechanisms for enforcing covenants, allowing trust to become self-interested (Baumgold, 2013). Locke (1894: 146-7) also identified deceit as an individual trait requiring regulation within a trust-based civil society, while Bentham (1907 [1789]) saw deceit as one element within people's utilitarian calculations, recognizing the need for its amelioration in the interests of the greater good.

Sharing these individualistic assumptions, later rational choice theorists associated deceit with self-interested utility maximisation (Becker, 1976; Coleman, 1990). Replicating a priori suppositions about human nature akin to Hobbes, Locke and Bentham, these writings also mirrored their predecessors in viewing the social conditions that shaped the incidence of deceit as the aggregate outcome of individual acts. In this context, while agreeing on the need to regulate deceit, those efforts had to target individual motives and actions.

Opposing this individualist framework, sociology developed a second approach towards deceit. Durkheim (1984 [1893]) highlighted the significance of sui generis integrative forces for the incidence of deceit within a society, with Goffman's (1952) related explication of fraud demonstrating how norms could actually facilitate deceit. Mauss's (1990 [1950]) analysis of the potlatch also focused on emergent ritual contexts generative of deceit, implying that group cohesion is secured through cultural customs in which the experiences of reciprocal feasting and gift giving make manageable, downplay, and even prompt a degree of misrecognition regarding the status competition underpinning this exchange economy. Deceit is here no longer a normative 'bad', but still exists as a 'social fact' structuring the actions of individuals.

Marx provided us with another, highly influential, version of this structurally oriented approach towards deceit and social order. His concept of 'ideology' proposed that capitalism promotes obfuscations of its real conditions of existence; obfuscations evident in 'inverted' forms of consciousness that arise from, and seek to provide a coherent solution to, the contradictions informing people's lived experiences of reality (Marx, 1954 [1887]: 43-87; Larrain, 1983). This difference between appearance and reality is not attributable to

individual failings, but to the distortions effected by the social relations and wage labour of capitalism. As Marx (1959 [1894]: 209) argues, referring to the visibility of profits, wages and prices, 'everything appears reversed in competition'. While the politics of Marx's approach varies from those of Durkheim and Mauss, these writers each address how collective forces emergent from, and possessing causal power over, individuals generate deceit. As such, it is unsurprising that they are less interested in, and less able to explain, how deceit emerges through these individuals' variable engagements with life's circumstances.

These two theoretical approaches have generated productive analyses of deceit, but each contain residual categories that tend respectively to marginalise the significance of social structures and the detail of individual actions. In the context of these limitations, we suggest an alternative is required if we are to appreciate how deceit emerges from people's active reflections on, and interactions within, the differentiated and dynamic conditions of modernity. This alternative is not fully developed, but existing sociological resources provide a basis for it.

DECEIT – OUTLINING A NEW APPROACH

In accounting for how deceit occurs, Simmel (2010; 2012 [1916]: 244-46) suggests life is lived within and outside social and cultural forms: there is an irreducible distinctiveness that characterises individuals, on the one hand, and the forms in which they interact, on the other, which means that people always, to some extent, lead a 'doubled existence'. There is thus always more-life (mehr-leben) than the interactions in which an individual is engaged, with people invariably reserving part of themselves from specific exchanges (Simmel, 1906: 442; 1997 [1906]: 170; 1971 [1908b]; 1950: 379).

This doubling of individuals within and outside social forms usefully highlights how deceit can emerge as it implies that while people may 'voluntarily reveal' 'the truth' about themselves, they may also, 'by dissimulation', seek to mislead others (Simmel, 1906: 444-5, 453). Such choices, precluded by oversocialised conceptions of the individual, feature in Simmel's writings on secrecy and 'the lie', and recur throughout his analyses of social forms;

analyses that emphasise the diverse consequences deceit has on relationships. Deceit can bind together those party to deception, as in a secret society, but may elsewhere fracture the forms in which common action occurs when it contributes to the betrayal of mutual trust (Simmel, 1906, 1950).

Simmel's view of how 'doubled' human relationships can result in deceit that may, depending on its context, reinforce or undermine social forms, facilitates a more nuanced view of its social consequences than do individualist or structuralist approaches. This is especially useful in contemporary societies wherein the proliferation of impersonal, specialised and fast-changing spheres of interaction 'absorb less and less the subjective entirety of the individual' (Simmel, 1950: 326; 1978: 179; Frederiksen, 2012: 734); a situation exemplified by the routinisation of virtual presences stimulated by the internet and other communications media (Castells, 2010).

The opportunities for deceit facilitated by virtual milieu are evident in the regular media scares associated with phishing and other Internet scams, but the significance of duplicity in mediated environments varies (Dean, 2010). Posting minor misinformation about height, age and additional personal characteristics in dating and other social networking sites, for example, is widespread, accepted and can actually stimulate online relationships and enhance the possibility of off-line encounters (Toma et al., 2008). If revealed to be major dissimulations, following physical meetings or third party revelations, however, such deceit can provoke anger and the abrupt cessation of interaction (situations explored in the film 'Catfish' and the spin-off television series). In this context, deliberation about how to present the self in the best light without transgressing the boundaries of 'acceptable' exaggeration is often encouraged by the guidelines of such sites and routinely engaged in by participants (Toma and Hancock, 2010).

The virtual worlds of 'avatars' provide another example that reinforces this point about the ambiguous meanings and significance of deceit in mediated contexts. As computer-mediated graphical representations, avatars offer individuals 'doubled' identities for the purposes of gaming and 'second life' simulations. While the original meaning of avatar

signalled a god assuming a deceiving form in order to demonstrate the capacity of divine power to destabilise human orders (Doniger, 1994), its contemporary meaning involves a deceit effected by individuals and constitutive of order (Best and Butler, 2013). Schroeder's (2002) account of avatar interactions, for example, makes clear that reflexive dissimulation in relation to one's 'real' physical character is expected. Taking this further, and drawing upon Simmel, Geser (2007) observes that these virtual orders nevertheless operate most effectively when participants trust in the continuity of avatar presences; a continuity dependent on individuals maintaining the integrity of their alternative persona over time. Such studies suggest that the relationship between deceit and trust can be close and complex, highlighting the importance of ascertaining precisely how individuals are doubled within modern social and cultural forms (Möllering, 2008).

Simmel allows us to highlight the space for deceit that exists within modern social forms, but in understanding why individuals deceive others we need to reflect further on the 'interested' nature of social interaction. Here, Bourdieu's writings are particularly noteworthy for their suggestion that people are predisposed, by the class-based nature of their habitus, to act interestedly in relation to the pursuit of different qualities and quantities of capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984; Bourdieu et al., 1963; Swedberg, 2010; Jackson, 2012). Within this context, actions categorised as 'honest' or 'deceitful' need to be understood in terms of who has the power to define them as such. In developing his analysis, Bourdieu (1986) identifies various types of capital, with social, cultural and economic forms supplemented by others (including political and intellectual capital), and consecrated as such by virtue of the fields in which they are recognised. He also analyses the power of the state to structure people's opportunities for entering these fields, and to shape what counts as legitimate/authorised and illegitimate/deceitful actions within them (Bourdieu, 1994: 4).

Bourdieu's analysis is an important resource in accounting for why people deceive, but remains constrained by its emphasis on habitual action; an emphasis he acknowledges (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133). In seeking to maintain his concern with the interestedness of deceptive action, while developing greater sensitivity to the importance of

individual deliberation, we draw here on a third theoretical resource. Archer's (2012) recent writings on reflexivity sensitise us to the importance of such deliberation as a key mediator of (deceitful) action and the contrasting contexts in which it occurs.

Developing Simmel's concern with the proliferation of social forms characteristic of modernity, and engaging critically with Bourdieu's assessment of how people formulate their interests within social fields, Archer suggests that the growing disjunctions, or 'contextual discontinuities', characteristic of contemporary change have profound effects on how people respond to their surroundings (Archer, 2010: 297; 2012: 39-40; Sayer, 2009: 122). These developments necessitate increasingly reflexive responses on the part of those hoping to apprehend successfully the variable meanings, significances and opportunities associated with deceit and other forms of action (Archer, 2007: 4; 2012: 2). For Archer (2012), reflexive responses occur when people engage in such activities as considering how to manage the self within contrasting social contexts, assessing past choices in relation to current circumstances and future opportunities, scrutinising the adequacy of available means in relation to desired goals, and planning ahead to meet possible contingencies. Such reflexivity is not only increasingly central to contemporary life, however, but also, we suggest, to ways of engaging with and managing deceit in an era where its salience can alter radically between locations.

The significance Archer attributes to reflexive deliberation in the modern era contrasts with her assessment of the situation within traditional societies structured by low levels of social differentiation and relatively homogeneous power elites and belief systems in which the habitual schemes of thought and action central to Bourdieu's work did indeed dominate. Reflexive deliberation was not missing from these traditional contexts – being essential for identifying opportunities for deceit, for monitoring its successful execution, and for seeking to repair the damage done when caught out – but the meanings and significance of deceit tended to be stabilised within longstanding systems of honour and repressive systems of punishment for transgressors (Archer, 2003; 2012: 2; Durkheim, 1973). In contrast, it is the social differentiation, situational variability and pace of change characteristic of modernity that promotes the need to engage reflexively rather than habitually with what Archer (2012:

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18-19, 50) terms the 'situationally determined logics of opportunity'. While she does not address how these logics can facilitate deceit specifically, it is our suggestion that this is exactly what can happen.[1] Possibilities for deceit clearly exist across diverse societies and eras. Nevertheless, if the multiple roles and patterns of identification and belonging emergent from such factors such as modern patterns of migration, social and occupational mobility and diversification promote reflexivity, as Archer suggests, the complexity of this situation also facilitates greater opportunities for the utilisation of deceit to further individual and collective interests in the present.

Avoiding the limitations of individualistic and structuralist approaches towards the subject, this section has drawn selectively on the writings of Archer, Bourdieu and Simmel in establishing key elements of a new theoretical approach. Situated against the doubled nature of social existence, we have conceptualised deceit as interested action, designed to mislead others, whose meanings and significance varies alongside the proliferating contexts characteristic of modernity. As the contextual variability of the current era becomes more complex, moreover, we have suggested with Archer that there is a greater need for people to engage reflexively with the opportunities afforded by such complexity; a need that intensifies experiences of the doubled nature of existence and, therefore, the potential for engaging in deceit. In order to develop this approach substantively, we now examine how these key features can be illuminated in the context of three very different engagements with insider/outsider boundaries across contrasting social and cultural forms.

DECEIT AS A CULTURAL STRATEGY

The importance of viewing the meaning and consequences of deceit in relation to the social and cultural forms in which it occurs is exemplified by cases of passing involving such variables as gender, disability, 'race' and class, and we focus on the former two. Deception in these cases involves a form of 'doubling' that does not threaten pre-contractual norms encompassing society as a whole, but constitutes a technique available for those seeking

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access to mainstream social interactions and the social capital available within such forms (Elias, 1994; Agnew, 2001).

Reflexivity is generally acknowledged to be key to passing – involving as it does strategies of planning ahead, managing and monitoring appearance and behaviour in order to be accepted as something one is not (Sánchez and Schlossberg, 2001) – but this form of deception existed long before the modern era. There exist detailed histories of transgender impersonations, for example, undertaken by those seeking access to otherwise forbidden roles and resources (Feinberg, 2006). Nevertheless, the early modern acceptance in the West of a 'two-sex' binary model of gendered identity - reinforced by the early-twentieth century medicalisation of 'trans-sexuality' into a 'disorder' evaluated by psychological testing and treated by surgical reassignment - reinforces Archer's (2012) argument that the meanings, significance and opportunity structures associated with deceit have become more complex within modernity (Meyerowitz, 2002). This is clear in Green's (2006) observation that there now exist specifically modern contexts and ideas that trans-individuals must negotiate if they are to be accepted for a distinctively modern form of 'treatment'. As Garfinkel's classic case study makes clear, moreover, these modern social and cultural forms facilitate particular types of deceit.

In exploring gender as a managed achievement, Garfinkel introduces us to 'Agnes', a nineteen year-old transgender patient born male but appearing 'convincingly female'. Following lengthy medical scrutiny, Agnes underwent reassignment surgery, yet her 'management' of gender deceived all involved (Garfinkel, 2006 [1967]: 89-91). Following treatment, Agnes revealed she was a 'typical' biological male but had taken female hormones since puberty, envisaging and cultivating an alternate identity for herself that she judged would in future result in her securing more radical future treatment. Medical specialists now consider this case an exemplar of how transsexual patients can deceive doctors, while transgendered people view Agnes as having reflected upon and negotiated successfully the power relationships characteristic of the contextual opportunities available to her (Stryker and White, 2006: 58). Using concealment and camouflage, and reflexively monitoring and

adjusting the detail of her performances in femininity, Agnes exploited the opportunities for deception brought about by binary assumptions regarding sex and the existence of surgical interventions in the treatment of 'gender disorders'.

Passing as female/male in order to gain access to an identity and lifestyle previously unavailable is not without difficulties. The autobiographies of trans-individuals reveal the pre-operative challenge of maintaining through constant self-scrutiny the 'façade' of their chosen identity (Hausman, 1995), while the violence experienced by many of those whose passing is discovered supports Doniger's (1994) suggestion that 'sexual doubling' is regarded as an especially potent and deceitful subversion of social order.2

Further issues pertaining to deception and passing are addressed in Goffman's Stigma. Focusing on modern cultural representations of 'normality', Goffman (1990 [1963]) examines how people with physical disabilities seek through deceit to manage their 'spoiled identities'. In these cases, 'passing' requires individuals to divide their lives into 'front-' and 'back-regions', meticulously managing the former, in order to exploit the opportunities inherent within the doubled character of human interaction (Simmel, 1906; Goffman, 1990 [1963]: 104). Studies of people suffering from Parkinson's, for example, detail how individuals conceal shakes and tremors by placing hands in pockets, or behind their back in order to maintain or gain status as respectable interactants (Nijof, 1995; Dyck, 1999).

In such cases deceit is a reflexive strategy – associated with camouflage, avoidance, body modification, and (other) presentations of self that must be carefully monitored – employed by those risking exclusion from cultural recognition formulated in relation to the very norms that encourage 'outsiders' to exercise such deceit. Attitudes to certain physical disabilities may have changed since Goffman's study, but there has been a much broader tightening in the norms of physical attractiveness and acceptability that has arguably increased those who have occasion to utilise technologies of passing. As physical ideals become more unattainable, with fewer belonging to 'the unblemished', deceit, in this limited sense, has become normalised, and not just online (Toma and Hancock, 2010). Consumer culture encourages us to create and live publically in that part of our 'doubled' selves

cosmetically enhanced through creams, technologies and modes of body management that disguise how we behave, feel and look like outside those multiple social forms in which we are expected to engage in flexible and increasingly challenging presentations of self as a means of maximizing the accumulation of resources (Bourdieu, 1986; Shilling, 2012).

If the above examples of passing demonstrate how individuals seeking access to various orders of interaction can undertake deception, we now turn to the very different case of governmental attempts to structure social forms, regulate 'doubled identities' and utilise deceit to advance state interests. At stake here is less the social acceptance or otherwise of particular identities, but the maintenance of political capital and even the credibility of the political process.

DECEIT AS A POLITICAL STRATEGY

Simmel's suggestion that life is lived within and outside social forms not only highlights how individuals are able to engage in deceit. It also implies that those possessing power over forms confront challenges in identifying, reflecting on the significance of, and regulating the types of deceit directed toward them. This is particularly evident in state attempts to deploy their meta-capital as a means of preventing deception on the part of those seeking entry through their borders (Bourdieu, 1994). Concerns about terrorism and illegal immigration have prompted states to initiate, multiply and assess the significance of multiple police check points, passport control, identity cards, iris, fingerprint and voice recognition devices, and the gathering of other biometric data to scrutinise and monitor identity. Through such steps, these authorities seek to minimise the opportunities for any 'doubling' of identities on the part of 'dangerous others' (Driskell and Salas, 2012). If governmental committees and policy think tanks in Europe, North American, Australia and elsewhere reflect on and seek to devise ever more effective means of fortressing their borders, however, this continues to be challenged by the ingenuity of those desperate to subvert or bypass these controls (Moorehead, 2006; Weber, 2013). Deceit and its detection are central to this conflict of interests.

States not only seek to detect deception, however, but also instigate it. Gary Marx's (1974) study illustrates this in highlighting a form of state-sponsored passing different to those considered so far – that of the double agent. The doubled identities of agents may involve inter-state deception, as in spying, but also the infiltration of social/political movements in monitoring 'subversive activity' within states. Just as our other examples of 'passing' have revealed the permeability of insider/outsider boundaries relative to identities, however, so too can attempts to reinforce these boundaries via double agents be problematic: if discovery is to be avoided, the 'real' identities of these individuals have to be kept firmly separate, involving what Dear (2013) describes as the intense preparation and reflexive scrutiny devoted to developing and maintaining these personas, yet 'cross-infection' often occurs. The numerous examples of state agents involved in the provocation of illegal acts indicate the ambiguities inherent to such identity work, as well as the risks of the 'false' identity becoming the 'real' one, or the double agent becoming a double double agent (Marx, 1974: 418).

One recent example of crossed doubled identities involves a UK undercover police officer who for seven years appeared indistinguishable from his environmental activist comrades, and lived as partner with one woman in the movement. While police representatives portrayed Kennedy as a 'rogue officer', it became clear that such doubling was a textbook surveillance method resulting previously in officers fathering children with those they were investigating (Lewis and Evans, 2013). Ethical problems aside, one question raised here is whether the reflexive efforts necessary to initiate and succeed in such doubled actions give way eventually to a permanent reshaping of identity in which the situational opportunities for deceit are submerged beneath the formation of lasting attachments and the attractions of interested actions of a very different order.

Moving beyond cases of individual double agents, inter-state relations raise broader issues about deception and insider/outsider boundaries. National borders have often served as key markers of 'we-identities' (Elias, 1970), with additional lines drawn around allies to whom one should tell the truth or to whom it is permissible to lie (Barnes, 1995). For Schmidt

(1976), indeed, international politics can be defined by the 'intensity' whereby 'political friends' are polarised to 'political foes', the latter becoming a 'counter-ensemble' (Sartori, 1989: 65). Schmidt's analysis is particularly relevant because of his influence on the US's political engagement with Islamic terrorism; an engagement predicated upon an 'enemy double' (Žižek, 2002: 52, 132-3).

The stability of such doubling strategies in maintaining distance between the social forms separating friends and foes is, however, questionable, with anxieties about the permeability of these borders prompting security services to engage in strategic surveillance and deception relative to friends (Godson and Wirtz, 2011). The American security service has, for example, long monitored the telephone calls of its allies (Steen, 2013).[2] In this context, the notion 'truth for friends and lies for enemies' seems nostalgic, as suggested by Bonn's (2010) study of the US war on Iraq as a carefully planned politically orchestrated mass deception. Recalling the words of Senator Johnson, who declared that 'the first casualty when war comes is truth', Bonn (2010: ix, 2, 45) explores how the Bush administration undertook a propaganda campaign following 9/11 to persuade Americans and the world that Iraq's 'weapons of mass destruction' (WMD) represented 'a grave and growing threat to US security'. Initially successful – 70% of the US public believed Iraq was involved in the terrorist attacks when America invaded – this campaign stalled when no WMDs were found, with the Senate Intelligence Committee admitting that 'faulty intelligence assessments' were used knowingly to 'justify invading Iraq' (Bonn, 2010: 12).

If the WMD campaign illustrates how state sponsored deceit can enhance political capital for governments, it also indicates how its uncovering can erode it. More generally, the accumulation of such government 'cover-ups', alongside people's growing awareness of how 'presentation strategies' are used by politicians (to limit damage through widely seen and instantly generated and replayed stage-managed claims of innocence made possible by modern communications technology and new media), has prompted claims of a general loss of credibility in political forms (Brown, 2006; Hood, 2007: 200; Bonn, 2010). Tellingly, the increasing focus on governmental transparency has in this context been identified as

indicative of a broader 'culture of mistrust', a deceitful veiling rather than rendering visible of the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion within organisations (Garsten and Lindh de Montoya, 2008: 1-7).

Such assessments possess affinities with popular conspiracy theories that attribute governments with the power to constitute social and cultural orders hegemonic of their interests, a view that often underestimates the difficulties of realizing such control given the doubled nature of the forms in which it must be managed (Sunstein. and Vermeule, 2009; Thomas. 2013). More considered sociological assessments of the growing scale of political deceit, however, include Meštrović's (1997) account of how politicians and corporations seek to accumulate political and economic capital by stage managing public events that draw selectively on history in evoking memories generative of 'fake' effervescences. Relatedly, exponents of the 'turn to affect' have suggested that the sensory impact of political displays stimulates alarm among the electorate that can garner support for partisan projects (Massumi, 2010); another indication of the salience of doubled identities for state as well as individual actions.

DECEIT AS AN INTELLECTUAL STRATEGY

The third main example we use to explore the contextually variant meanings and significance of deceit reflects on how sociology and social research themselves generate dissimulation. If the potential for deceit is enhanced in modernity by the proliferation of interactional spheres and their capacity to 'absorb less and less the subjective entirety of the individual' (Simmel, 1906: 449, 451), sociology's commitment to maintaining critical distance from, and engaging reflexively with, the social orders and forms it seeks to comprehend make it well placed to exploit this situation. The degree to which sociologists take advantage of this situational logic of opportunity, indeed, can play a major role in determining the success of their research, and the intellectual capital they accrue.

Sociological theorizing implies a critical distance from its objects of study, but such distance is similarly central to empirical engagements with individuals and groups via

methods such as 'participant observation', ethnography and interview. These techniques exemplify what it means to be only contingently immersed within particular social forms (Simmel, 1906). Interpretations constructed on the basis of such methods not only involve the researcher in an overtly doubled relationship with those s/he is researching - participating in the life-worlds of subjects while maintaining a footing in the social and cultural forms of academia - but also involve an attempt to uncover cultural values, modes of organisation and social structures that may appear insignificant, alien or contrary to the people studied. In these circumstances, sociologists aim to 'make society visible' through reflexively constructed 'second order' accounts that differ significantly from the 'first order' narratives on which they are based. As Strathern (2000: 312) argues, this project to uncover a 'truth' unknown to or obscured from its subjects does not necessitate deceit but certainly creates space for it. Fine (1993: 278, 271) highlights this when identifying how 'the illusion of verisimilitude' informing published work occludes the selectivity inherent to research, as well as the sometimes blatant uses of deceit to cultivate sympathy when gathering data. This is also evident in Savage's (2010) account of how interview based research in UK sociology historically utilised contrasting frames of reference that create radically differing pictures of reality, as well as his identification of the manner in which researchers manipulated interpersonal situations in facilitating interviews.

Particular accounts of researcher deceit include Daniels's (1983) fieldwork 'confessions', detailing how she misled informants, feigning friendships with upper class women she viewed as 'ludicrous' or, at best, 'quaint'. This deceit included a variant on the 'passing' in relation to gendered norms explored earlier: Daniels (1983: 204) engineered her physical self (losing 40lbs, and cultivating femininity) having reflected carefully on what it would take for her to be accepted by those in the research environment. The 'ethical' as well as the 'practical' merits of such passing strategies are subject to debate, but the variety of methodological positions relative to participant observation, ranging from the 'overt insider' to the 'covert outsider' and 'native as stranger', reinforce how issues of deceit and insider/outsider boundaries are implicated within key research methods (Bulmer, 1982).

These have at times been the source of huge controversy both inside and outside sociology, with Humphreys' (1970) Tearoom Trade and Milgram's (1963) psychology experiments being just two of the most infamous cases.

The question of research ethics raised here is of particular note given the scrutiny of ethical procedures relating to research approval for interviews, focus groups, ethnographies and participant observation that is now unavoidable for research involving humans or animals (Barrera and Simpson, 2012). There is, however, an important link between research ethics and the broader focus on transparency noted earlier. Just as 'transparency' can be a cover for questionable corporate and governmental agendas, so too ethical scrutiny of research methods integral to contemporary university life is an organisational strategy intended to signal integrity, though subject to similar questions about whether it veils rather than renders visible boundaries of inclusion and exclusion (Garsten and Lindh de Montoya, 2008). The phenomenon of 'informed consent', for example, is a cornerstone of empirical research, but research involves transformations unrevealed to those involved, not least the contextualisation of views, actions and events within frameworks often unrecognisable to participants (Fine, 1993: 290).

If deceit can feature in sociological research, this tendency is even more evident within the corporate research strategies characteristic of contemporary 'knowing capitalism' (Thrift, 2005). Thrift's (2005) description of the large data set research integral to commercial success is evident in studies of how 'circuits of information' are embedded in information technologies utilised for enhancing sales (Gross, 2012). Yet the issue of deceit in relation to 'informed consent' also looms large in these practices. Individual consumers may 'agree' to information about their activity on an internet site being collected, for example, though may rarely realise the consequences of their actions. As Gross (2012: 114, 122) argues, anonymizing data does not prevent this process from creating value out of information. Here, the purchases of individuals whose data is harvested by corporations are not just re-presented, but become valued through a process of redefinition involving a series of increasingly sophisticated methodological forms of coding that 'delete' the consumer as a social subject

enmeshed within relationships outside a particular economic act (Adkins, 2005). Those responsible for collecting and managing such data may disagree, but there seems just as strong a reason for using the term 'deceit' here as when exploring other reflexive appropriations of opportunities for furthering interests via intentional acts of obfuscation.

CONCLUSION

This paper has drawn selectively on Simmel, Bourdieu and Archer in developing a distinctive approach towards, and stimulating renewed sociological engagement with, deceit. Having illustrated our argument via a range of cultural, political, academic and corporate utilisations of deceit that function to negotiate, subvert or reaffirm boundaries between 'insider' and 'outsider' groups, we question the conclusion that a culture of self-disclosure has displaced the early modern conception of public life as a realm of 'masks' (Sennett, 1974; Giddens, 1992). Instead, it appears that deceit not only permeates much social interaction, but also is able to flourish as a result of high levels of social differentiation and ideational diversification. If deceit was historically implicated in the 'problem of order' because of its capacity to undermine trust, or uncover the mystifications that maintain collective cohesion, it now functions as a variable means for negotiating identities and interests across multiple social forms rather than being something simply destructive or productive of order. The contextual variability of deceit's meanings and significance, moreover, has made reflexive engagements with its potential benefits and costs all the more important.

Recognizing this suggests that a sociological re-engagement with deceit is overdue. This, as we have suggested, needs to be attentive to the possibility that sociology can be implicated in the deceit it seeks to comprehend; in terms, for example, of how its research methods can conceal the sometimes deceitful negotiation of insider/outsider boundaries. In a sense, there is nothing special about sociology here: not only might we expect the 'first-order' accounts of the objects of research to be as prone to the reflexive utilisation of deceit as those of the researcher, but Simmel's argument that individuals lead a 'doubled existence' within and outside a proliferation of modern social forms suggests we are all 'participant observers'

now, strategically negotiating a series of variously permeable insider/outside boundaries. As we have sought to demonstrate throughout this paper, however, sociology can nonetheless play a particularly important role in the interrogation of such phenomena, since it has a wealth of disciplinary resources that can facilitate critical, theoretical, 'meta-reflexive' analyses of the reflexive utilisations of deceit today.

NOTES

1. One illustration of the proliferation of forms within the modern era, and their significance for the relationship between reflexivity and deceit, involves the economic sphere. The eighteenth century food riots in Britain, for example, were caused partly by the proliferating opportunities for deceit that resulted from the 'bread nexus' (characterised by habitual, seasonally driven production) becoming incorporated into a 'cash nexus' (requiring planning and deliberation to maximise profit) (Thompson, 1991: 79, 80-3, 131). The opportunities for economic deceit and fraud have multiplied exponentially since then, however, with the invention of financial forms and products based on nothing more than 'market betting' (Archer, 2012: 35). As evidenced in the events leading to the economic crash of 2007, deceit has become endemic within much financial practice, with reflections about how to leverage profit becoming increasingly sophisticated (Farlow, 2013).

2. It is important to point out the social perspective and cultural specificity of the viewpoint informing our discussion. Transgendered individuals in the West frequently view their presentation of self (including their decision to have sex change operations) as an authentication of 'real' identity, rather than anything concerned with

deeit. Furthermore, historically and contemporarily, there exist a number of cultures in which transgendered people enjoy privileged status. This highlights further the emphasis we place throughout this article on taking into account how social forms, and the types of doubling they encourage, are essential for the analysis of deceit.

3. The 2013 leaking of information by the former US National Security Agency employee Edward Snowden symbolises the intersection of transparency and deceit, trust and mistrust, in the accumulation and disclosure of information today. Demonstrating how the NSA's surveillance embraced the domestic populations and political elites of the US and its 'allies' as well as 'enemies', Snowden highlighted unprecedented levels of covert activity facilitated by modern technology, and provoked anxieties about and deceitful reactions from other states urging 'transparency' while claiming to be unaware of, and uninvolved in, such activities.

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Chris Shilling PhD is Professor of Sociology and Director of Graduate Studies (Research) in SSPSSR at the University of Kent, UK. His major monographs include The Body and Social Theory Sage, (3rd edition, 2012), Changing Bodies: Habit, Crisis and Creativity (Sage, 2008), The Body in Culture, Technology and Society (2005) and, co-authored with Philip A. Mellor, The Sociological Ambition (Sage, 2001) and Re-forming the Body (Sage, 1997). His latest book, co-authored with Philip, is Sociology of the Sacred: Religion, Embodiment and Social Change (Sage, 2014).

Philip A. Mellor PhD is Professor of Religion and Social Theory at the University of Leeds, UK. His major monographs include Religion, Realism and Social Theory: Making Sense of Society (Sage, 2004) and, co-authored with Chris Shilling, The Sociological Ambition: Elementary Forms of Social and Moral Life (Sage, 2001) and Re-forming the Body. Religion, Community and Modernity (Sage, 1997). His latest book, co-authored with Chris, is Sociology of the Sacred: Religion, Embodiment and Social Change (Sage, 2014).