because it has a thriving private sector. The Yangzi delta region is famous for being an epicenter of private enterprise, which makes it difficult to draw nationwide conclusions from the Yangzi survey and in-depth interviews. In fact, the Wenzhou and Sunan economic models, both of which rely upon private enterprise, developed in areas of the Yangzi delta that had high populations and little cultivatable land. These conditions produced economic hardship that encouraged individuals to turn to private enterprise and their remote locations increased autonomy and limited potential state inference. In contrast, in cities that received greater government and foreign investments (i.e., Guangdong and Beijing), markets most likely emerged in a manner more consistent with the state-centered approach. The development of distinct economic models throughout China is an issue that continues to challenge market transition research, and it is likely that data from different regions support both the bottom-up and state-centered approaches. Regardless of these limitations, *Capitalism From Below* is economic sociology at its finest, as it provides a novel theory of how social processes affect markets, supported with high-quality and insightful analyses.

REFERENCES


**Deceit and Self-Deception**

**Jeroen Bruggeman**


This book is important because it provides a new understanding of the foundation of social life—cooperation—and its antipode—conflict. We tend to interpret people’s cooperative efforts as sincere, which they often are, but sometimes we misinterpret them and are exploited. If we find out, which is not necessarily the case, we feel deceived. The punch line is that the deceivers are all of us, and that we deceive ourselves about it.

By embedding deception in Darwinian evolution over a very long period, and incorporating many species, Trivers establishes a theoretical depth and range

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1 I am grateful to discussants in the sociology seminar at my university.

2 Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Achtergracht 166, 1018 WV Amsterdam the Netherlands; e-mail: j.p.bruggeman@uva.nl.
beyond sociological treatments of this topic. His grain size of daily social life is coarser than Goffman’s, though, and his style is popular science, backed up by references. Surprisingly, it all started with parasites. Did any social scientist know that roughly “half of all species on earth are parasitic on the other half” (p. 116)? When parasitic load is high in number and virulence, an advantage in the evolutionary arms race against them is to have two sexes, rather than one, to make new genetic combinations at every reproductive step. Consequently, individuals in two-sex species, such as humans, have to find suitable partners, who in turn signal their genetic qualities in order to be chosen by the opposite sex. This opens up opportunities for deception.

On top of genetic quality, women also look for men’s willingness to invest in offspring and access to valuable resources. Accordingly, men may try to fake commitment and wealth, for which there is considerably more room than for faking one’s physical condition or genes. Furthermore, men have more to win than women by overstating their qualities, because of less reproductive investment (bearing the unborn, giving birth, care-taking). In the jargon of evolutionary game theory, men have a higher benefit-to-cost ratio. To reproduce, both men and women look for a monogamous partner, but women have an information advantage about the child’s father, whereas men are uncertain if the child they care after is theirs. Consequently, men worry about their women’s monogamy—without worrying much about their own. Because of this higher uncertainty, as well as more room for deception and lower investment, men have evolved different psychologies than women, with implications far beyond the book’s main topic. Biologist Trivers stays clear of biological reductionism, though, and presents many examples where culture is the key ingredient. He emphasizes that “language, which permits the past to be expressed, communicated, and remembered, both vividly and in detail, adds immense opportunities to dress up the past or deny it” (p. 275). In a nutshell, human deception, which can show up in almost any relationship or gossip, has its evolutionary origin in sexual selection, as well as other situations of conflicting interests among human ancestors, and developed considerably in *Homo sapiens* through language.

Self-deception entered the ancestral stage because it saves cognitive load for deceivers, and makes deception harder to detect. Self-deceived liars are less nervous, less occupied by inventing and subsequently remembering their stories, and give off less signal of lying, such as nervous displacement gestures. Boasted self-confidence, for example, can be advantageous in courtship, as well as in conflict if the opponent is not too much stronger. It enhances perseverance, reduces signals of hesitation, and can yield victory over a realistically uncertain competitor. A recent study added that in countries with more socioeconomic inequality, where there is more competition for scarce positions and other resources, people are more self-inflated, for example the United States versus Japan (Loughnan et al. 2011). Within countries, lies (a subset of deceptions) turned out to have a skewed distribution: most lies are expressed by a small number of people (Halevy, Shalvi, and Verschuere 2014).

Self-deception can also be imposed on others, for example by priming black students that they are bad at math just before a math test, or by suggesting health improvement through actually noneffective cures for illnesses. Worse, police
interrogation can make people believe in crimes they never committed or sexual abuses they never endured.

Trivers sees religion as a prime example of (self-)deception. To explain its persistence, he focuses on its consequences, such as increased cooperation among members. Many religions prescribe cleaning and other health-supporting behaviors, for example bad food avoidance, which yield survival advantages. After a 3-day visit to a Romanian monastery, I might add to his list that living in a religious community lowers stress; its members can count on support without being competitively compared with others, which is the very reason for stress to increase in schools, organizations, and the labor market. Trivers has an interesting take on religion’s drawbacks. The more different religions compete with each other, the more inflated the self-images of in-group members tend to become, which happens mostly in regions with a high parasite load. Moreover, in such, usually tropical, areas it is more advantageous for women to have offspring with out-group men, to increase genetic variation. Their out-group choice, in turn, makes in-group men more jealous and violent, who then impose more severe restrictions on women.

Particularly interesting is Trivers’s treatment of false historical narratives that are used by elites and their loyal followers to distort and justify their wrongdoings. These narratives overlap with self-deception in war. When becoming more powerful, upcoming leaders become less empathic with the less powerful, men more so than women. Leaders are not only stronger self-deceivers, but because they are able to better shield themselves off from the consequences of their decisions for out-groups and the lowest ranks of their in-group, they receive less feedback to learn from, making matters worse and wars longer lasting. Religion has a role in war, too: it enhances in-group solidarity, decreases identification with out-group members, and it provides a particularly poisonous self-deception, namely self-righteousness. By killing enemies, “you are doing the Lord’s work” for a bigger goal than just your own group, thereby reducing feelings of guilt.

Group members collectively creating false images of out-groups and of themselves, with or without religious elements, occurs not only in conflict, but generally when groups compete. Once a deceit is collectively supported, it becomes very hard to correct. To explain why, Trivers missed the critical mass effect (Schelling 1978). For sure, out-group members and their social network will readily notice the deceit and may revolt against it, such that in-group’s benefit-to-cost ratio, if only depending on boosted morale and out-group’s counteractions, would decrease. If, however, the deceit becomes an in-group norm, conspicuous conformism, for example publicly criticizing the out-group, will yield social support and thereby increases conformists’ commitment, while deviance, for example friendship with an out-group member, might get punished (severely). These mechanisms of norm enforcement can counterbalance the other effects, such that the in-group gets caught in its own web of deceit, sometimes to a bitter end. Only a critical mass of reformers can change the norm, whereas a single opponent stands no chance—in fact, her/his only chance is to move out of his/her suffocating social environment, if s/he can. A case in point is a whistle-blower in a failing organization.

But there are exceptional groups. Trivers attributes the success of science partly to its institutionalized mechanisms against deceit and self-deception. These are
criticism and replication on the basis of requisite reporting of methods and data (Fanelli 2013). He warns, however, that the greater the social or human content, the more deceit and self-deception can be expected, and he is particularly harsh against disciplines that deny the importance of biology in social life (pp. 314–315). His book appeared shortly before the scandal of a data-fabricating social psychologist broke out. Its ramifications showed, on the one hand, that deception was more frequent in biomedicine, which is not a social science. On the other hand, that deception does not always imply self-deception: data fabricators are very well aware of their misconduct.

We may thus ask how important self-deception is to successfully deceive others in general. It seems that in several cases, deception is well feasible without self-deception, and many liars turn out to be surprisingly frank about their lying (Halevy, Shalvi, and Verschuere 2014). Hence, the scope of the deception–by–self-deception thesis is to be further examined. Another important question is why, despite our evolved intelligence, do so many people let themselves be fooled, even without group pressure? For example, we believe that confident people provide better judgments in the face of self-deceivers who can deceive us self-confidently (Leu and Maniscalco 2010). Obviously, we can’t check everything we hear and our “cultural immune system” (Richerson and Boyd 2005) offers only limited protection against false information. Once we believe a falsehood we’ve heard, however, we tend to ignore true information that debunks it. Mark Twain observed that “it’s easier to fool people than to convince them that they have been fooled,” but we still need an explanation as to why.

Trivers does ask the question if people can undo their self-deceptions, possibly with the help of others. Some can, but people prefer to keep a positive self-image by ignoring negative information about their behavior, including their self-deceptions. As a matter of fact, a positive mood is better for the immune system, too. Also, memory is consistently biased toward a more favorable self-image. Denial of inconvenient truth can become self-reinforcing once initial commitments have been made, especially when these are publicly visible, for example steering an airplane or a business into a wrong direction. People then rationalize away information that contradicts their course of action, as it causes cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1962), and project their misbehavior on someone else. The onset of aggressive action, for instance, is always othered. On a critical note, for defense mechanisms against self-knowledge, Trivers owes more to Freud than he acknowledges, and whom he criticizes only.

The examples indicate that most (self-)deception have trade-offs, and that very high levels of it are only feasible in the face of weak or outnumbered alters. Goffman (1969), who was overlooked by Trivers, described how difficult it is for an individual to keep up a display of normality while cheating. Collins (2004:20) recaps: “Life follows routine rituals for the most part because it is easiest to do so, and full of difficulties if one tries to do something else.” If detected, deceivers risk being punished or abandoned. Trivers argues that their feelings of shame, guilt, and loneliness cause internal dissatisfaction, decrease sleep, and lower the working of the immune system, making them more vulnerable to parasites. We saw that collective deceivers, in contrast, do follow their routine ritual, and because they are blinded by their
social cohesion and collective projections, most of them have very few problems with the harm they bring on out-groups. In most cases, however, both groups and individuals must limit their (self-)deceptions at some point or face a rebound, even though groups have different trade-offs than individuals, especially cohesive groups with institutionalized deceptions.

When trying to go beyond Trivers in determining the trade-offs, evolutionary game theory seems to be an obvious choice. Remember that Trivers’s (1971) biggest success so far was his work on reciprocity between nonrelatives, thanks to Axelrod and others who elaborated it game theoretically (Kupferschmidt 2011). One among possible interpretations of deception could be noisy reciprocity: with respect to simple reciprocity, of cooperation upon cooperation and defection upon defection, a noisy player diverts from this scheme by chances unknown to his coplayer, as in a difficult marriage. By means of this reading, deception theory can be related to a major discovery in game theory, of so-called zero determinant (ZD) strategies (Press and Dyson 2012). Those probabilistic strategies can beat any other strategy, such as tit-for-tat, by manipulating opponents into cooperation. When a computer played a ZD strategy with a relatively high level of extortion against humans, it won, as predicted (Hilbe, Röhl, and Milinski 2014). However, human subjects—not aware they played against a computer—found the extortion unfair, and preferred to defect at a cost to themselves rather than to cooperate, thereby reducing ZD player’s gains. Only generous versions of ZD that never defected upon cooperation managed to elicit high levels of human cooperation. Humans then gained even more than the generous ZD-playing computer, which in turn still gained a great deal more than its more extortionate counterpart, showing that at the dyadic level, at least, generosity can win in the end.

With respect to what we already knew about deception from Goffman, Machiavelli, and others, Trivers’s book increases the depth and range of our understanding considerably, by fruitfully combining evolutionary and social science, and leads to important questions. Because everyone is exposed to deceit, and sometimes deceives themselves, everybody should read it.

REFERENCES

Land of the Cosmic Race

Martha King1


In *Land of the Cosmic Race: Race Mixture, Racism, and Blackness in Mexico*, Christina A. Sue makes significant theoretical and empirical contributions to the field of racial and ethnic studies and to its growing subfield of comparative investigation. These contributions are more impressive because they stem from Sue’s dissertation and compose her first book. Her study is an ambitious ethnography exploring Mexicans’ negotiation of racial and national ideology at a micro level, as well as the themes of mestizaje (race mixture), racism, racial identity construction, and blackness in everyday discourse. Sue’s qualitative approach richly blends various sources: participant observation, interviews, and focus groups. Her fieldwork was conducted between 2003 and 2005 in Mexico’s urbanized Veracruz region, which lies on the coast southeast of Mexico City. As in comparable metropolitan areas in Mexico, the majority of residents are mestizo2 while a smaller proportion is indigenous. Veracruz, however, is unique because it is home to a higher proportion of people of African descent and its residents have more phenotypical variation. It was a major gateway for African slaves and has acted in recent years as an entry point for migrant black Cubans.

For much of Mexico’s colonial period, blacks outnumbered whites (p. 11). Finding segregation increasingly difficult to maintain because of race mixing, colonial authorities implemented a hierarchical caste system based on race, color, culture, and socioeconomic status with Spaniards at the top, then mixed-race individuals, Indians, and Africans at the bottom. During the postrevolutionary

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1 Graduate Center at the City University of New York (on leave), 365 Fifth Avenue New York, New York 10016; e-mail: mking2@gc.cuny.edu.
2 Sue defines mestizo in the Mexican context as a “racial term” as opposed to a color term because it connotes ancestry and a sense of group identity. Mestizo, as used by Mexicans and Sue, usually refers to someone who is nonindigenous and of mixed heritage. Sue finds that the term mestizo is not popularly used in Veracruz although it is commonly used in government reports and educational materials. Sue’s informants used the term only when Sue inquired about race; when discussing color, they used a variety of other terms.