

# When Pinocchio's nose does not grow: belief regarding lie-detectability modulates production of deception

# Kamila E. Sip<sup>1,2,3</sup>\*, David Carmel<sup>4</sup>, Jennifer L. Marchant<sup>5,6</sup>, Jian Li<sup>7</sup>, Predrag Petrovic<sup>8</sup>, Andreas Roepstorff<sup>1,2</sup>, William B. McGregor<sup>2</sup> and Christopher D. Frith<sup>1,6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Center of Functionally Integrative Neuroscience, Aarhus University Hospital, Aarhus, Denmark

<sup>2</sup> Department of Aesthetics and Communication - Linguistics, Aarhus University, Aarhus, Denmark

<sup>3</sup> Department of Psychology, Rutgers University - Newark, NJ, USA

- <sup>4</sup> Department of Psychology, The University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK
- <sup>5</sup> Institute of Cognitive Neuroscience, University College London, London, UK
- <sup>6</sup> Wellcome Trust Centre for Neuroimaging, University College London, London, UK
- <sup>7</sup> Department of Psychology, IDG/McGovern Institute for Brain Research Peking University, Beijing, China
- <sup>8</sup> Department of Clinical Neuroscience, Karolinska Institutet Stockholm, A Medical University, Stockholm, Sweden

#### Edited by:

Matthias Gamer, University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Germany

#### Reviewed by:

Thomas Baumgartner, University of Basel, Switzerland Nobuhito Abe, Kyoto University, Japan

#### \*Correspondence:

Kamila E. Sip, Social and Affective Neuroscience Lab, Department of Psychology, Rutgers University -Newark, Smith Hall, Room 301, 101 Warren Street, Newark, NJ 07102, USA. e-mail: ksip@psychology.rutgers.edu

Does the brain activity underlying the production of deception differ depending on whether or not one believes their deception can be detected? To address this question, we had participants commit a mock theft in a laboratory setting, and then interrogated them while they underwent functional MRI (fMRI) scanning. Crucially, during some parts of the interrogation participants believed a lie-detector was activated, whereas in other parts they were told it was switched-off. We were thus able to examine the neural activity associated with the contrast between producing true vs. false claims, as well as the independent contrast between believing that deception could and could not be detected. We found increased activation in the right amygdala and inferior frontal gyrus (IFG), as well as the left posterior cingulate corts (PCC), during the production of false (compared to true) claims. Importantly, there was a significant interaction between the effects of deception and belief in the left temporal pole and right hippocampus/parahippocampal gyrus, where activity increased during the production of deception when participants believed their false claims could be detected, but not when they believed the lie-detector was switched-off. As these regions are associated with binding socially complex perceptual input and memory retrieval, we conclude that producing deceptive behavior in a context in which one believes this deception can be detected is associated with a cognitively taxing effort to reconcile contradictions between one's actions and recollections.

#### Keywords: mock-crime, deception, beliefs, lie-detection, fMRI







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#### **BEHAVIORAL RESULTS**

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FIGURE 2 | Mean RT under the different conditions. Separate means are given for false, true and general responses with the lie-detector "on" and "off". Error bars represent one standard error of the mean. Participants' responses were slower for general questions than for theft-related questions. RTs to truth- and falsehood-eliciting theft-related questions did not differ, and RTs were not modulated by whether the lie-detector was "on" or "off."



#### **IMAGING RESULTS**

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FIGURE 3 | The main effect of response (false > true). Panels on the left show the activation cluster and panels on the right show mean parameter estimates in the activation cluster in the right amygdala (A and B), right IFG







FIGURE 4 | The interaction between response type (true or false) and belief about the lie-detector (on or off). Panels on the left show the activation cluster and panels on the right show parameter estimates in the activation cluster in the right hippocampus/parahippocampal gyrus (A and B) and left temporal pole (**C** and **D**). In these loci, the difference between the BOLD activation caused by false vs. true responses was abolished (and for the hippocampus/parahippocampal gyrus, reversed) when participants believed the lie detector was off.





#### MAIN EFFECTS: DECEPTIVE vs. TRUTHFUL RESPONSES







# CONCLUSIONS



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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