

Introduction

Ambition is a quality valued in our culture. There are positive and negative aspects of ambition. People in power are better liars (Carney 2010), and some people who have been in positions of power have been less than honest. For example, Bernie Madoff stole billions of dollars from investors and President Bill Clinton lied about his relationship with a White House aide. Is there a period in a person's development when their perception of the ethics of lying is formed? There has been research on how a child's mind perception of lying changes as they grow older (Lee et al., 1997). However there has been less of a focus on an adolescents' perception of lying and whether or not it has any correlation to an adolescents' ambition. Would it be possible to prevent or reduce lying by people in power by taking action during the formative years? It may also help us to keep cheating to a minimum in schools.

A person's environment may have an effect on their tendency for lying. Factors such as age or gender may play a role in a participant's ambition and level of honesty (Mann et al., 2014). The results of Mann's study support the idea that people's perception of lying is influenced by those around them. Dr. Mann gave out a survey to a group of undergraduate students to assess their lying habits. Each of the participants also brought a relative, friend or someone they knew well with them to also participate in the study. Mann compared the results and found that the lying habits of the pairs of participants had similar lying tendencies between the two people in the group. The results of the parent and child pairs in particular were very similar to each other. This supports the idea that children adopt their parents' ethics and retain them into adulthood.

Xu, et al., found that adults and children view lying differently (2009). Xu asked children questions about their perception of honesty based on small vignettes read to them. The children responses showed that they viewed most lies as equally bad. Most children are taught at a young age that lying is deceptive and that they should not lie under any circumstances. Adults understand that it is not always better to tell the truth. In some situations, it is more socially acceptable to tell a polite lie than to tell the truth. The adults' responses showed that they viewed antisocial lies to be much worse than small polite lies. (Xu et al., 2009). Xu's study promotes the idea that views on lying are developed during childhood. Children taught different values view certain lies worse than others depending on their cultural values. Xu's study didn't consider whether or not the differences between the two groups of children were also present in similar groups of people who had the same cultural difference but were either adolescents or adults. Serota et al., looked at frequency of lying. In this study, adults, aged 18-65 were given a survey about the types of lies they told, how often they told them and how they viewed each type of lie. Serota found that although adults lie on average of once a day, most of the lies are told by a small group of frequent liars who skew the mean average upwards. (Serota et al., 2010).

In a school setting, some students cheat on tests. Murdock et al., did a study that examined why students believed they cheated (2010). The reasons were broken down into two different groups. One group was internal factors such as a student not studying enough, or wanting to get a higher grade. The second group was external factors such as an inadequate teacher or an inadequate amount of time to finish the test. Students blamed external factors such as the ones mentioned above as the reason they cheated more often than internal factors. This suggests that students do not want to cheat, but may do so because of things that then believe are out of their control (Murdock et al., 2010).

As of today, there has been very little research to determine a person's ambition and whether or not there is a correlation between a person's ambition and affinity for lying. By looking at the correlation between ambition and tendency to lie in high school students, we will have a better understanding of the development of the adolescent brain. A better understanding of when and why adolescents lie may someday allow us to catch this lying behavior early, and to help people be more honest as they get older. Ambition and frequent dishonesty are also traits of antisocial personality disorder. Knowing the correlation between ambition and lying could help identify antisocial adolescents.

The goal of this study was to determine whether or not there is a correlation between ambition and lying in adolescents, and if so, what type of relationship exists. This study also looked at certain demographic factors to understand if they would affect an adolescent's ambition or likelihood to lie. Since there has been limited research on lying in adolescents, this paper will increase our knowledge of lying behavior in adolescents.

Methodology

Six hundred fifty students from a suburban high school participated in a voluntary ten minute questionnaire during class. Ages and demographics are shown in Table 1. Students would choose to opt-out if they did not want to complete the survey. The students were instructed not to put their name on the survey and any survey with a name or other identifiable information was discarded. By completing the survey, the students gave consent to participate. The students answered questions on ambition and lying. The data was all self-reported. Halevy conducted a study to determine the validity of self-reported data. Halevy's study supports the idea that self-reported data is accurate (Halevy et al., 2014).

Table 1: Ethnicity reported by participants

Asian/Pacific Islander	African American	Hispanic	Middle Eastern	Native American	South Asian	White
22	49	42	5	3	6	216
6%	13%	11%	1%	1%	2%	59%

Table 2: Ages of participants

14	15	16	17	18
46	88	75	102	44

Table 3: Gender of Participants

Female	Male	Didn't Report
184	159	10

Procedure

The survey had four different sections. The first section was demographic information, but no information was obtained that would be able to identify the participant. The second page determined how honest the participants' perceived their friends and family to be. The third passage determined how honest the participants perceived themselves. The fourth page determined the participants' level of ambition. Students rated questions on a five point Likert scale. For questions regarding honesty, students would answer questions on a scale of 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely) on how likely they are to lie in a certain situation. For example, "How likely are you to tell a story about yourself that is not true in order to make yourself seem more interesting?", or "How likely are you to not say anything when a cashier gives you too much change?" For questions about ambition, students would rate sentences on a scale of 1 (very like me) to 5 (very unlike me) on how much a statement represented their personality. For example "I become very passionate about a topic for a while but I change interests every few months", or "There is a lot of pressure for me to succeed". All students were given the questions in the same order. All procedure elements were identical for students in both schools. Some of the questions were also asked with an inverse relationship to ambition to make sure that students weren't filling out the survey without reading the questions. Examples of this include, "I have difficulty maintaining my focus on long term projects that take more than a few days to complete", and "I think achievement is overrated".

There were several surveys that were thrown out for different reasons. Any survey that was filled out with repeating numbers, such as all 1's, were thrown out. Any survey that was not completed was also thrown out. Any survey that had portions of the survey that conflicted with

other portions of the survey was thrown out. As well as any survey that was filled out in an obviously joking manner (i.e. age was filled out as “old enough”) was also thrown out.

After the survey was administered, a smaller group of students (15) were asked about their knowledge of the schools’ honor code.

I analyzed the data using a program called Statistics Open For All (SOFA) statistics. This program is a free open sourced computer program. I uploaded my data into the program and analyzed my data using ANOVA tests, Pearson Correlation tests, and T tests. The correlation between ambition and lying was analyzed by the Pearson Correlation test. A t-test was used to compare the demographics of the study to the demographics of the school as a whole.

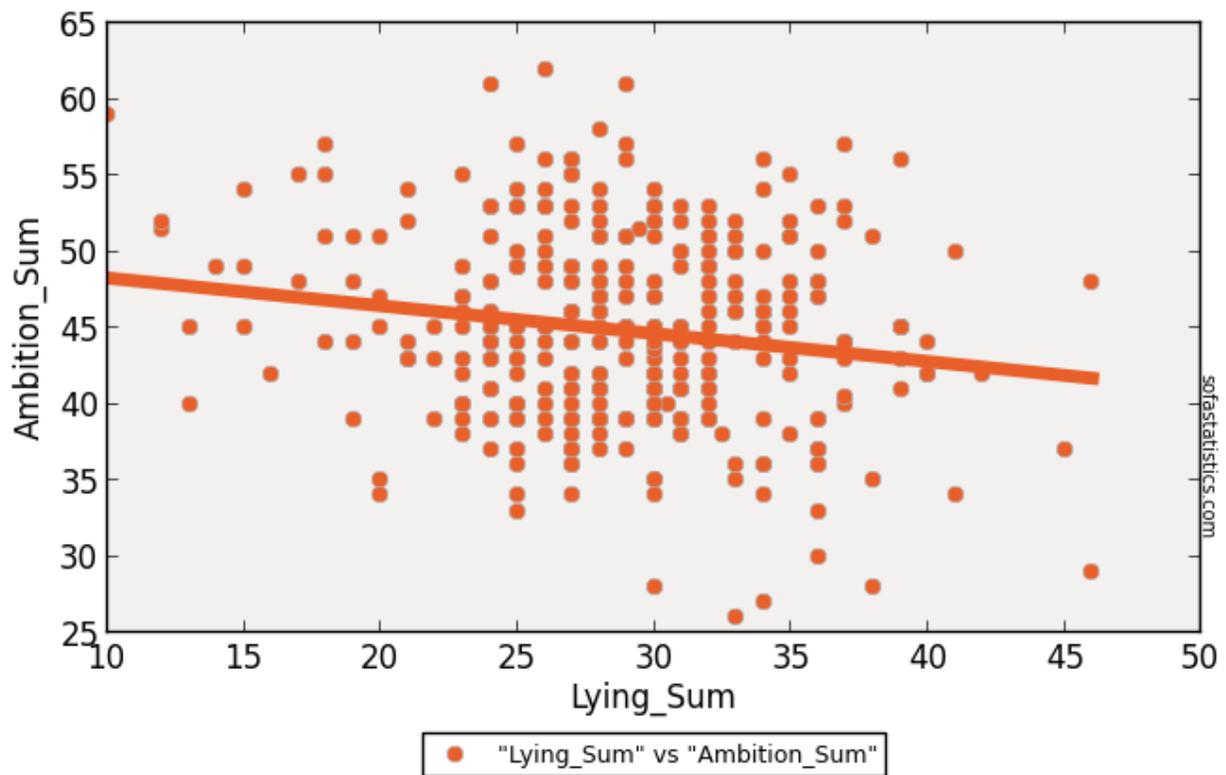
Results

A correlation between ambition and lying for the overall group yielded an R^2 value of 0.028 as shown in figure 1. There was a conflicting negative correlation between ambition and lying.

Figure 1

Pearson's R statistic: -0.166

Two-tailed p value: 0.002

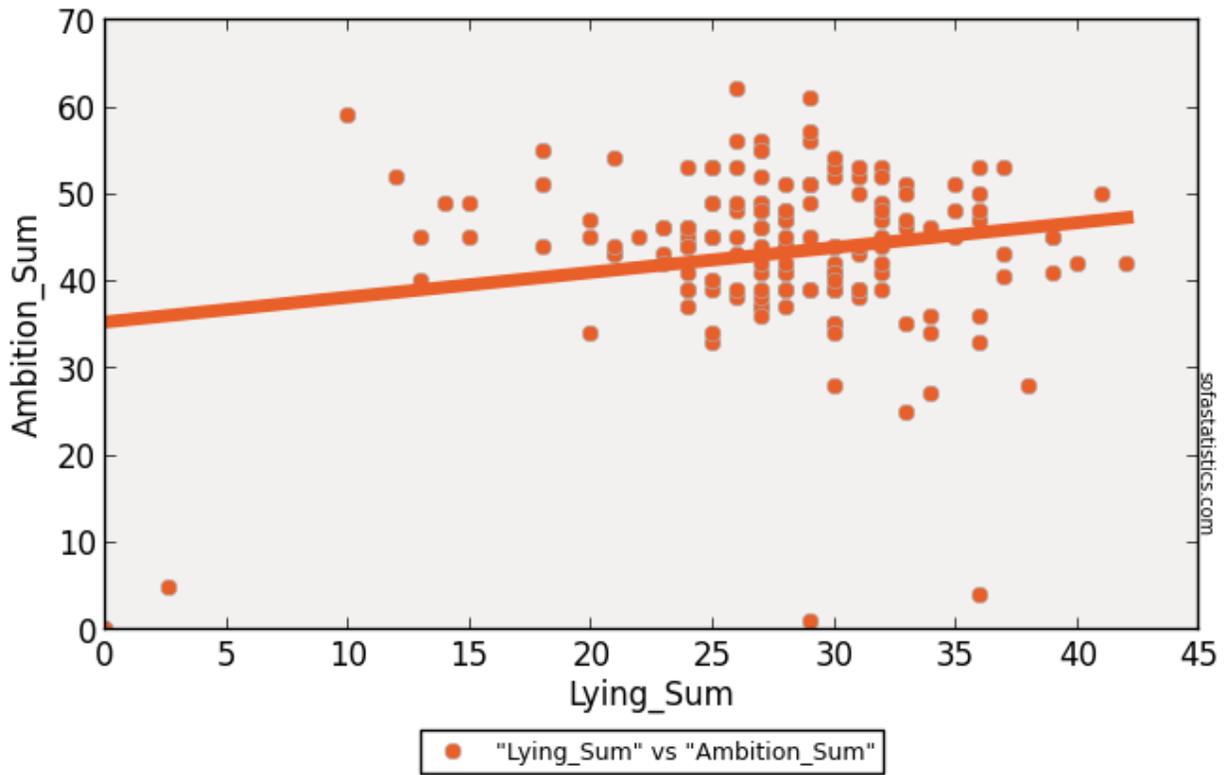


This means that there are many other variables that could account for the negative correlation.

While the test found a significant correlation with a pvalue of 0.002, there is a large degree of variance in the results. This suggests that ambition does not cause a person to lie less, but it is still correlated.

The overall group was broken down into both male and female groups and showed differing results as shown in figures 2 and 3.

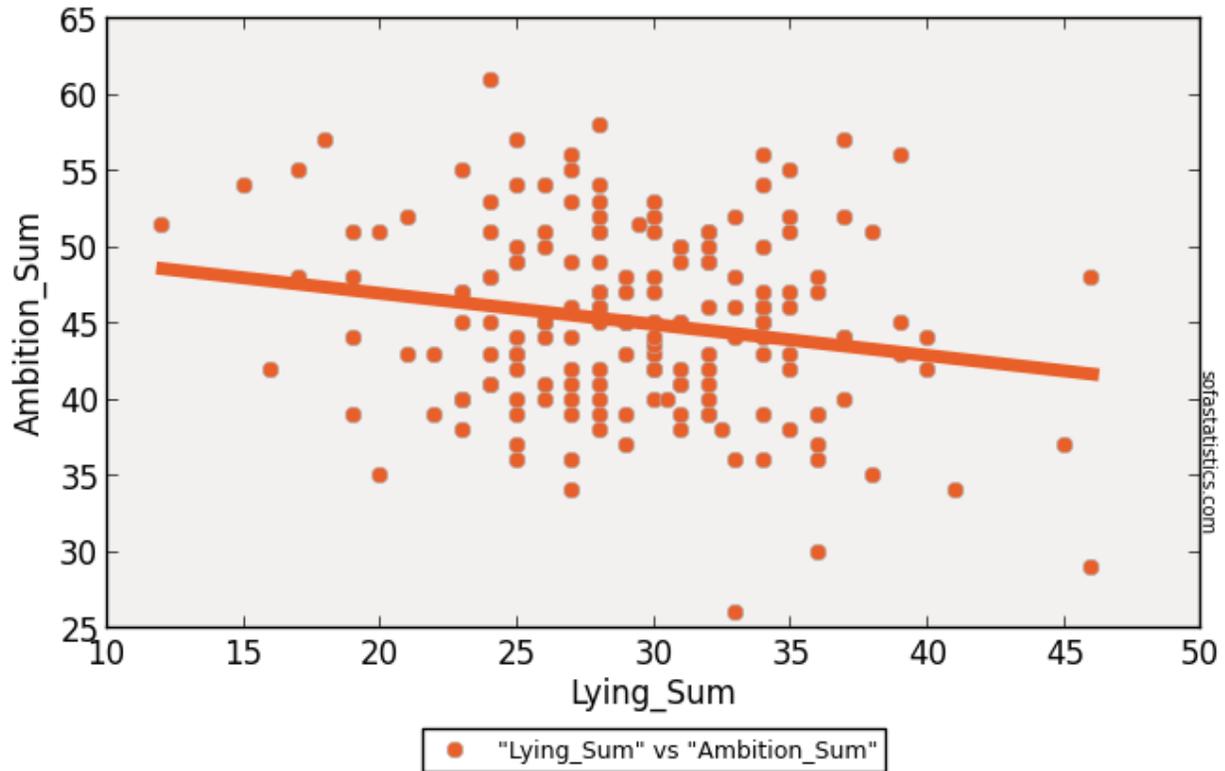
Figure 2



The results for the male students showed a significant positive correlation between ambition and lying. The results were significant with a p value of 0.011. The results also showed an R^2 value of 0.037636. This also indicates that the variance was smaller within the male group than the overall group, but still means that ambition did not cause an increase in lying in the male student population. There is still a significant positive correlation between ambition and lying.

In the female student population, there was a significant weak negative correlation. The correlation had an R^2 value of 0.36864. This means that there was a lot of variance in the correlation. This correlation was significant with a p value of 0.010.

Figure 3



In the figure above, there is a negative correlation between ambition and lying. There is some variance within the data which suggests that there are more factors than just ambition which cause a person to lie more. The correlation has enough variance that ambition does not influence a person's lying habits.

All of the results of the study were significant. All of the p values of the tests were in range to be considered significant ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$), while most were very significant ($p\text{-}$

value <0.01). All of the correlations had a lot of variance which means that ambition was not a cause for lying. The female populations each had a negative correlation between ambition and lying. All of the correlations were weak.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to determine if there was a correlation between ambition and lying in adolescents. The students as a whole were found to have a negative correlation between ambition and lying as a whole. It was a significant negative correlation. But it was a weak correlation. When broken down into groups by gender, the correlation was different. The male participants had a significant positive correlation between ambition and lying. The more ambitious the male students tended to lie more. But the female students had a significant negative correlation. The more ambitious female students tended to lie less. More studies need to be done to test for a difference between male and female adolescents. There could be many reasons as to why this happened. The reasons as to why the female and male students had significantly different results needs to be looked into and was not looked at in this study. Men may lie more in general which would cause a difference in results. But research needs to be done to test for a significant difference in the lying habits of both men and women.

The study did not find a correlation between age and the correlation between ambition and lying.

Children develop their perception of lying as children (Lee et al, 1997). They develop differently based on many things such as the child's culture. When a child becomes school aged, they might cheat on a test because they have the ambition to do well in school. Understanding why students cheat could help teachers and school administrators develop ways to stop cheating from happening. Children tend to blame their cheating habits on external factors (Murdock et al, 2008). But putting an emphasis on being honest in schools above grade point averages may stop students from cheating.

Habits about lying tend to carry into adulthood (Mann et al, 2014). Some people have been in positions of power and have lied. It is important to understand the reasons behind why people lie in order to figure out ways to instill at a young age the moral integrity to be honest. Understanding the reasons as to why people lie can be traced back to many different variables. Ambition may be one of them, but more research needs to be done to understand the reasons as to why people of all ages lie. This study looked at the correlation between ambition and lying in adolescents. More research needs to be done to see if there is a difference in the correlation between ambition and lying in children and adults to see if there is a change in the correlation.

In summary, the present study suggests that adolescents in general, lie less as they become more ambitious. It also suggests that there are differences in the correlation between ambition and lying in male and female adolescent students. Additional studies in this age group as well as adults and children are necessary in order to strengthen the correlation found in this study or if more data would suggest something else. More studies are also necessary to determine if there is a significant difference in the correlation between ambition and lying between males and females of all age groups.

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