



The Artful Dodger: Answering the Wrong Question the Right Way

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RUNNING HEAD: The Artful Dodger

The Artful Dodger: Answering the Wrong Question the Right Way

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Abstract

What happens when people try to “dodge” a question they would rather not answer by answering a different question? In four online studies using paid participants, we show that listeners can fail to detect dodges when speakers answer similar – but objectively incorrect – questions (the “artful dodge”), a detection failure that went hand-in-hand with a failure to rate dodgers more negatively. We propose that dodges go undetected because listeners’ attention is not usually directed at a dodge detection goal (Is this person answering the question?) but rather towards a social evaluation goal (Do I like this person?). Listeners were not blind to all dodge attempts, however. Dodge detection increased when listeners’ attention was diverted from social goals to determining the relevance of the speakers’ answers (Study 1), when speakers answered egregiously dissimilar questions (Study 2), and when listeners’ attention was directed to the question asked by keeping it visible during speakers’ answers (Study 4). We also examined the interpersonal consequences of dodge attempts: in Study 2, listeners who detected dodges rated speakers more negatively, while in Study 3, listeners rated speakers who answered a similar question in a fluent manner more positively than speakers who answered the actual question, but disfluently (Study 3). These results add to the literatures on both Gricean conversational norms and inattentional blindness. We discuss the practical implications of our findings in the contexts of interpersonal communication and public debates.

“Don't answer the question you were asked. Answer the question you wish you were asked.”

Robert McNamara, describing the lessons he learned during his time as Secretary of Defense during the Vietnam War (Morris, Williams, & Ahlberg, 2004)

As this opening quote demonstrates, many in public life seek to master the artful dodge, frequently attempting to wriggle out from answering questions they would rather avoid. Though perhaps most grating when performed by politicians, question-dodging occurs in a wide array of other contexts: corporate executives avoiding reporters' requests for their expectations for the next fiscal quarter, employees sidestepping their bosses' questions as to why they are late for the third straight day, or spouses evading their partners' inquiries as to their whereabouts the previous evening. Under what conditions does a dodge go undetected, allowing speakers to escape unscathed? In the studies that follow we show that dodges can go successfully undetected when a speaker responds to a question by offering an answer to a similar question rather than the actual question asked – provided that the listener's attention is not drawn to that answer. For example, a debating politician asked about the illegal drug problem in America who instead provides an answer about the need for universal healthcare has engaged in a successful dodge if listeners have both forgotten that he was asked about illegal drugs and evaluate him highly. Indeed, we show that in some cases, speakers will achieve higher ratings by answering a similar question fluently than answering the correct question disfluently.

How is it possible that listeners could fail to notice such question dodging? We suggest that dodgers mask their deception by exploiting implicit norms that direct

listeners' attention away from detecting whether a particular answer truly addresses the specific question asked. Indeed, the title of our paper is taken from the Dickens character, the Artful Dodger, who was skillful at distracting the attention of his victims with conversation as he picked their pockets (Dickens, 1838; 1994); by assuming that friendly conversation implied a lack of guile, his victims made themselves vulnerable to his thievery. Indeed, Grice's theory of conversational implicature posits that listeners make assumptions about the good faith cooperation of speakers (1989). His "Cooperative Principle" has four constituent maxims, that communication will a) contain the appropriate *quantity* of information; b) be of truthful *quality*; c) be delivered in an appropriate *manner*; and, most crucial to the present investigation, d) will be *relevant* to the topic at hand. Deceptive communication, in this view, is communication that violates any of these maxims (see also Burgoon, Buller, Guerrero, Afifi, & Feldman, 1996; McCornack, 1992). In support of this theory, previous research demonstrates that: speakers prompted to generate deceptive communication do in fact construct messages that violate these maxims, listeners rate deceptive communication as violating these maxims to a greater degree than truthful communication, and listeners rate communication that violates these maxims as more deceptive and less honest (Buller & Burgoon, 1996; McCornack, Levine, Torres, Solowczuk, & Campbell, 1992; Yeung, Levine, & Nishiyama, 1999).

While previous research has focused on how speakers violate Gricean norms when producing deceptive communications, we focus on a different implication of those norms. Because listeners assume that speakers generally abide by such norms, speakers may be given the benefit of the doubt when they adhere closely enough to conversational

norms (Burgoon, Blair, & Strom, 2008; Clark & Clark, 1977; O'Sullivan, 2003). Further, while previous research demonstrates that egregious violations of conversational norms are likely to be detected, we suggest that the same norms allow speakers to push the boundaries of communication: when speakers answer a question that is similar enough to the question asked, listeners may fail to notice that the answer offered is, in fact, irrelevant. In line with previous research, however, we do suggest that when speakers stray too far –answering questions that are egregiously dissimilar – listeners are likely to notice.

While it seems counterintuitive that people fail to notice something as seemingly blatant as a speaker answering the wrong question, previous research has demonstrated people's surprising failures to notice even dramatic changes to their environments due to the limitations of their attentional systems (Grimes, 1996; Johansson, Hall, Sikstrom, & Olsson, 2005; Simons & Levin, 1998; Simons & Rensink, 2005). In Simons and Chabris (1999), for example, participants attending to the goal of counting basketball passes made by a group of people entirely failed to notice a man in a gorilla suit walking through the game.

Similarly, we suggest that, though attending to whether a question has actually answered a question is clearly an important goal for listeners, it competes with other, often more important, goals. For instance, research suggests that when people encounter someone new, they automatically pursue the social goal of evaluating that person: Do I like this person? Do I trust this person? (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008). People are surprisingly accurate at these social evaluations (Ambady, Bernieri, and Richeson, 2000), and are more likely to pay attention to people's faces than their voices in forming these

impressions (Bauchner, Kaplan, & Miller, 1980; Buller, Strzyzewski, & Comstock, 1991; Ekman & Friesen, 1974).

Given attentional limitations, therefore, we suggest that listeners' attention to social goals – forming impressions of speakers – makes them relatively poor at noticing when a speaker dodges a question asked by answering a similar question instead. In short, we suggest that when listeners hear a speaker answer a question, their assumption that the speaker will follow norms of cooperative communication – among these assumed norms is that the speaker's answer will be objectively relevant to the question asked – makes them vulnerable to failing to notice that the speaker is not answering the question asked, and is instead providing an answer to a different question.

As an illustration, imagine the not-so-hypothetical case of a politician whose media consultants have advised him to talk about healthcare in an upcoming debate. Should the politician be asked about health care, his prepared answer about healthcare will, of course, be a relevant and correct response. However, should the question be about the illegal drug problem, we suggest that the answer about healthcare is similar enough that listeners would fail to detect the dodge. Should the question be about the War on Terror, however, that answer would be too dissimilar, prompting listeners to detect that dodge. Thus the *similarity* between the question asked and the question answered is one crucial determinant of dodge detection. But also, as outlined above, answering a similar question should only go unnoticed when listeners' attention is not directed toward dodge detection. We predict that focusing attention on whether the politician answers the question asked should increase detection of dodge attempts. Thus the attentional *goal* of the listener is our second proposed key factor in determining dodge detection.

Overview of the Experiments

We tested the role of these two factors in four experiments, investigating when dodge attempts will be noticed by listeners, while also exploring the consequences of dodging on listeners' interpersonal perceptions of speakers. In Study 1, participants watched a debate in which a speaker answered the correct question or answered a similar question. We also varied the listeners' goals (social evaluation vs. dodge detection) to examine the impact of goals on dodge detection. In Study 2, participants listened to a debate in which a speaker answered the correct question, answered a similar question, or answered a dissimilar question. We assess the impact of similarity on dodge detection, as well as the impact of successful and unsuccessful question dodges on listeners' social evaluation of the speaker. In Study 3, we include a condition in which the speaker answers the correct question, but in a disfluent manner, exploring whether answering a similar question well might be perceived more positively than answering the correct question poorly. Finally, in Study 4, we explore a practical intervention to increase the likelihood of dodge detection – making the question asked more salient – which shifts listeners' attention toward dodge detection goals.

Study 1: Goals, Attention, and Successful Dodges

In Study 1, we explored how social goals contribute to the listeners' failure to detect question dodging. Participants watched an excerpt of a debate in which a speaker answered the correct question (the question he was asked) or a similar question (a topically-related question), and were later asked to identify what question the speaker had been asked. We expected participants who viewed speakers answering a similar question

would frequently fail to realize that the speaker did not answer the question he had been asked. Most importantly for our account, we predicted that the goal that participants brought to the debate would impact their likelihoods of dodge detection. Some participants were directed to attend to how they socially evaluated the speaker (*social goal*), some were directed to attend to whether the speaker answered the question he was asked (*detection goal*), while others were given no specific guidance (*no goal*). We expected that the social goal and no goal conditions would result in the same low rates of dodge detection, suggesting that participants' default goal under the no goal condition was, in fact, social evaluation. We also expected, however, that diverting attention from the default social goal towards the whether the speaker answered the question asked would increase dodge detection, suggesting that limited attention is one of the causes of listeners' failure to detect dodges. We had three specific hypotheses:

H1: Overall, dodge detection will be low when speakers answer similar questions.

H2: Reflecting the primacy of social evaluation goals, listeners directed to attend to a social goal will be as poor at dodge detection as those given no goal.

H3: Reflecting the role of attention, listeners directed to attend to whether the speaker answered the question asked will exhibit improved dodge detection.

Method

Participants. Listeners ($N = 333$, 70% female, $M_{age} = 47.1$, $SD = 23.2$) completed the study online. They were recruited using an online survey company that compensated participants with an online currency.

Procedure. In this study, each participant watched a 4-minute clip of a mock political debate designed to simulate an actual televised debate (Norton & Goethals,

2004). Participants were randomly assigned to one condition of a 3 (goal: none, social, dodge detection) X 2 (dodge: correct, similar) between-subjects design.

Participants given no goal were told to pay attention because they would be asked questions about the clips afterwards. Participants given a social goal were instructed to attend closely to how they felt about the speakers and whether or not they liked the speakers, and were told that they would later be asked about their feelings. Participants given a detection goal were instructed to attend to whether or not the speakers were answering the questions they were asked, and were told they would later be asked about the questions the speakers were asked.

All clips began with a question about education for the first speaker, to which the speaker provided an answer about education. The second speaker was then asked to give his opinion about universal healthcare, or asked to give his opinion about illegal drug use in America. The second speaker's response was always the same, an answer about universal healthcare (Appendix 1). Thus participants either heard the second speaker answer the correct question, or a similar (but incorrect) question.

After listening to the entire clip, listeners completed two multiple-choice questions recalling the question asked of each speaker. The answer choices were education, health care, the drug problem, or the War on Terror.

Results

Pretest. In order to establish that the answer to the similar question was indeed recognized as being incorrect, we asked a different group of participants ($N=48$) to read the second speaker's answer and select which question best fit that answer, given the same four option multiple-choice question. Fully 94% of listeners identified healthcare as

the question that the second speaker answered, $\chi^2(2) = 78.88, p < .001$. Removed from the difficulty of following a live exchange, these participants experienced little uncertainty as to which question fit the answer they had just read, suggesting that listeners who recall incorrectly in the results below from the live exchanges are truly victims of a successful dodge.

Dodge Detection. Before addressing the three hypotheses, we first define what constitutes a successful dodge. A successful dodge occurs when a speaker answers a question that is not the correct question but believes that the speaker's answer did reflect the actual question asked. In our example, a successful dodge occurs when the speaker responds to a question about illegal drug use with an answer about healthcare and listeners do not identify that the actual question was about illegal drug use. A dodge is detected, on the other hand, when listeners recall the actual question asked despite the speaker's efforts to dodge it by answering a similar question. We measure dodge detection by assessing whether listeners select the correct multiple-choice response regarding which question the second speaker was asked. Given that there are only four options, this leaves listeners with a 25% chance of randomly selecting the correct response. Consistent with recent research (Levine, 2001), we conceptualize dodge detection as occurring on a binary scale (accurately detected or not) as opposed to on a continuous scale.

First, H1 predicted that, overall, dodge detection would be low when speakers answer similar questions. As expected, listeners who heard the speaker answer a correct question were more accurate at recalling the question asked of the second speaker (85%) than were listeners who heard the speaker answer a similar question (45%), $\chi^2(1) = 60.7$,

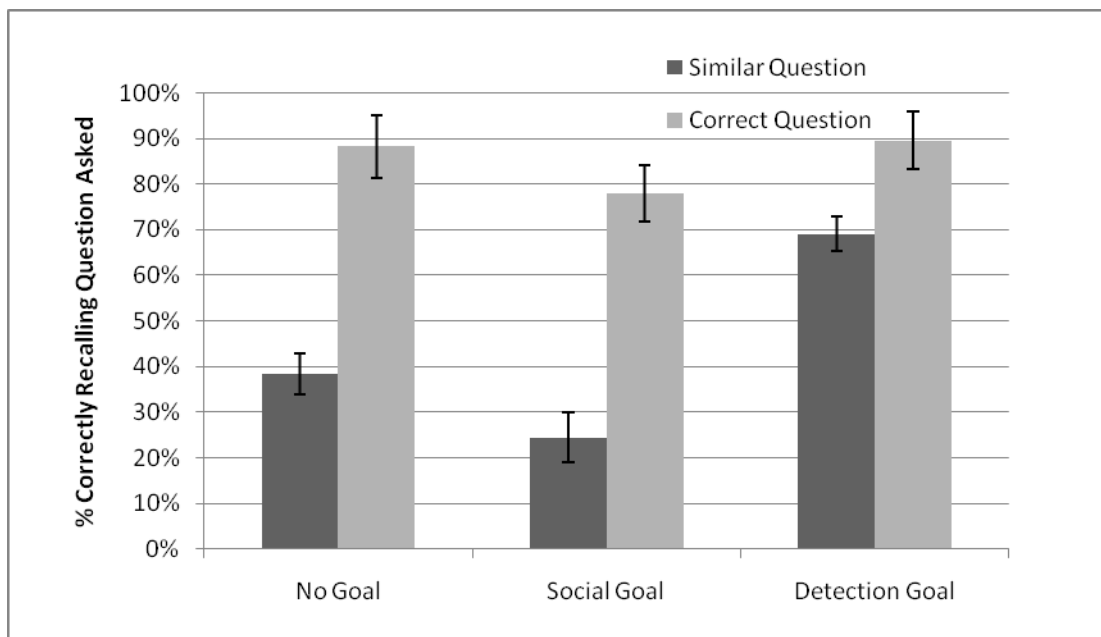
$p < .001$, suggesting that answering a similar question impaired listeners' ability to remember the actual question the speaker was asked. Indeed, of the 55% of participants who incorrectly failed to identify that the speaker who answered a similar question had been asked about illegal drug use, 40% incorrectly recalled that he was asked about healthcare – reflecting that the speaker's strategy of answering a question about illegal drugs with an answer about healthcare had convinced many listeners that he had actually been asked the question he chose to answer.

While H1 predicted an overall effect of question dodging, H2 and H3 made predictions about the impact of specific goals on dodge detection. H2 predicted that dodge detection among participants who received a social goal would not be different than that of those who received no goal, consistent with our account that social goals are the “default” motivational state in such interactions. H3, on the other hand, predicted that shifting listeners from default social goals into a mode where they attended more to content would increase dodge detection.

Listeners in the *no goal-correct* condition were more accurate at recalling the question asked of the second speaker (88%) than those in the *no goal-similar* condition (39%), $\chi^2(1) = 27.4, p < .001$. As expected, results for participants given a social goal were strikingly similar: listeners in the *social goal-correct* condition were more accurate (78%) than those in the *social goal-similar* condition (25%), $\chi^2(1) = 30.8, p < .001$. Confirming H2, there was no significant difference in dodge detection among participants in the no goal and social goal conditions when the second speaker answered a similar question, $\chi^2(1) = 2.3, p = .10$.

H3 predicted that when compared to participants with no goal or a social goal, participants with a detection goal would exhibit increased dodge detection when the speaker answered a similar question. As can be seen clearly in Figure 1, the incidence of dodge detection in the *similar* condition when participants were given a detection goal was significantly higher than detection in both the *no goal-similar* condition (69% vs. 39%), $\chi^2(1) = 10.1, p = .001$, and the *social goal-similar* condition (69% vs. 25%), $\chi^2(1) = 20.7, p < .001$.

Figure 1. The impact of similarity and goals on dodge detection (Study 1).



Note: Bars signify one standard error.

Study 2: (Dis)similarity and Dodge Detection

Study 1 explored our first key factor contributing to dodge detection – the goal of the listener – demonstrating that under default social goal conditions, answering a similar question can result in successful question dodging. Although Study 1 began to examine the role of our second key contributor – similarity – in Study 2 we extended the range of similarity, examining how answering a dissimilar question can increase dodge detection. Of the three conditions in Study 2, two are the same as in Study 1: a condition in which the speaker answers the correct question, and a condition in which the speaker answers a similar question. It also includes a new condition in which the speaker attempts to answer an egregiously dissimilar question: in this new condition, the second speaker was asked about the War on Terror, but offers the same answer about universal healthcare. Thus, we varied whether the speaker answered the correct question (about healthcare), a similar question (about the illegal drug use problem), or a dissimilar question (about the War on Terror). In Study 2, we used audio excerpts from a mock debate between two speakers, using the same text as in Study 1.

H4: When speakers answer questions that are too dissimilar from the actual question, dodge detection will increase.

In addition, Study 2 explores not just the extent to which listeners detect dodge attempts, but the interpersonal ramifications of detecting such dodges. The objective of artful dodgers, of course, is to fail to answer the actual question and to ensure that listeners fail to notice. We predicted that when listeners do notice that speakers have violated the Gricean norm of relevance, the speaker would suffer interpersonal costs.

H5: When listeners detect that a speaker has dodged a question – when the speaker answers a dissimilar question – their interpersonal ratings of the speaker will become more negative; when listeners fail to detect dodges – when the speaker answers a similar question – their ratings will be unaffected.

Method

Participants. Listeners ($N = 243$, 57% female, $M_{age} = 43.0$, $SD = 12.7$) completed the study online. The study was administered in a computer lab as part of a larger set of studies. Listeners were compensated with cash at the end of their participation.

Procedure. Listeners heard an audio excerpt from a mock debate which began with a question about education for the first speaker, to which the speaker provided an answer about education. Listeners were then randomly assigned to one of three conditions in which the question asked of the second speaker was varied; as in Study 1, the second speaker always responded by answering a question about universal healthcare. Some listeners heard the speaker asked a question about healthcare (correct condition), some heard the speaker asked about the illegal drug problem (similar condition), while others heard him asked a question about the War on Terror (dissimilar condition), before hearing his answer about healthcare.

After listening to the entire excerpt, listeners evaluated both speakers on four interpersonal dimensions: how much they trusted him, how much they liked him, how honest he was, and how capable he was, all on 6-point scales (1: *not at all* to 6: *very much*). We created a composite index of these items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$).

Finally, respondents answered the 4-option multiple-choice questions about which question each speaker had been asked, as in Study 1.

Results

Pretest. To confirm that the question about the illegal drug problem was more similar to the healthcare question than the question about the War on Terror, a separate sample of participants ($N = 48$) rated how similar both the illegal drug problem and the War on Terror were to healthcare, on 7-point scales. As expected, the illegal drug problem was rated as more similar to healthcare ($M = 4.90$, $SD = 1.56$) than the War on Terror ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.62$), $t(47) = 6.14$, $p < .01$.

Dodge Detection. Accuracy in recalling the question asked of the second speaker varied across conditions, $\chi^2(2) = 15.13$, $p < .01$. However, listeners who heard the speaker answer the correct question (82%) and those who heard him answer a dissimilar question about the War on Terror (70%) were not significantly different in their ability to recall the actual question, $\chi^2(1) = 2.81$, $p = .09$. Thus speakers' attempts to answer a dissimilar question prompted listeners to notice that dodge; rather than believing that the speaker had actually been asked a question related to the answer he offered (about healthcare), participants remembered that he had been asked about the War on Terror.

In contrast, as in Study 1, listeners who heard the speaker answer a similar question were significantly worse at recalling the actual question: just 54% did so, lower than both other conditions, $\chi^2(1) > 4.45$, $ps < .04$. Of the 46% of participants who recalled incorrectly, 26% believed that the candidate had actually been asked about healthcare, demonstrating that his answer about healthcare had led them to believe that he had been asked about healthcare. Replicating H1, answering a similar question resulted in a successful dodge; consistent with H4, dodging the question by answering a dissimilar question resulted in recall on par with when the speaker answered the correct question.

Interpersonal Evaluations. Ratings of the second speaker on our composite measure of interpersonal evaluation were impacted by our manipulation, $F(2, 240) = 7.05, p < .005$. Supporting H5, listeners who heard the speaker answer a dissimilar question rated him more negatively ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.39$) than those who heard the speaker answer the correct question ($M = 3.46, SD = 1.22$) or a similar question ($M = 3.28, SD = 1.06$), $t_s > 2.75, p_s < .01$. Importantly, evaluations of the speaker who answered the correct question and those of the speaker who answered a similar question did not differ, $t(167) = 1.02, p > .31$, suggesting that dodging by answering a similar question can be as effective, in interpersonal terms, as actually answering the correct question. Ratings of the first speaker were not impacted by our manipulations, $F(2, 242) = .96, p = .38$.

Was the success of the second speaker's dodge related to listeners' interpersonal ratings of him? When the speaker answered a dissimilar question, listeners' ratings were highly and negatively correlated with whether they recalled the actual question (and thus noticed the speaker's unsuccessful dodge attempt), $r(74) = -.49, p < .001$; a less-than-artful dodge thus had serious consequences for the would-be dodger. In contrast, no such relationships emerged when the speaker answered the correct question, $r(82) = .11, p > .31$, or answered a similar question $r(87) = .08, p > .46$. These findings suggest that there are interpersonal costs of unsuccessful dodge attempts, while artful dodging can effectively sidestep those costs.

Table 1: The impact of similarity on dodge detection and interpersonal ratings (Study 2).

	<u>Condition</u>		
	Correct	Similar	Dissimilar
Interpersonal Ratings (<i>SD</i>)	3.46 (1.22)	3.28 (1.06)	2.75 (1.39)
% Recalling the Actual Question	82%	54%	70%

Study 3: Answer the Correct Question Poorly, or Dodge?

The previous studies have demonstrated that speakers can get away with dodging questions without being detected and without social cost by answering similar questions. In everyday life, people often attempt to dodge questions when they are not prepared with a good answer to the question asked – as in the example of politicians stammering through poorly phrased answers to questions for which they are not prepared. Indeed, another of Grice's (1989) conversational norms suggests that listeners expect speakers to offer answers in an appropriate *manner* – one aspect of which is that it not be delivered in an inappropriate style. In Study 2, we compared the efficacy of dodging a question by answering a similar question to stumbling through an answer to the correct question. We expected that providing a well-delivered answer to a similar question would result in lower recall of the question asked than answering the correct question, replicating H1. Moreover, we expected that interpersonal evaluations of speakers who successfully dodged questions by answering a similar question would not be significantly different than evaluations of speakers who answered the correct question, replicating H5. Study 3 tests an additional hypothesis:

H6: Answering the correct question in a disfluent manner will result in lower interpersonal evaluations than offering a fluent answer to a similar question.

Method

Participants. Listeners ($N = 275$, 56% female, $M_{age} = 39.2$, $SD = 15.5$) completed the study online. They were recruited using an online survey company that compensated participants with an online currency.

Procedure. In this study, listeners were assigned to watch one of three video clips of a mock political debate. The first two conditions used same videos as in Study 1: one in which the second speaker offered an answer to the correct question (which was about healthcare), and another in which the second speaker offered an answer to a similar question (which was about the illegal drug problem). We created a third condition in which the second speaker offered an answer to the correct question (which was about healthcare) using the identical text as the other conditions, but while fumbling through this answer, adding pauses, “um”s, and “uh”s throughout.

Listeners evaluated both speakers on the same four interpersonal dimensions as in Study 2; we again created a composite index (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .93$).

Finally, listeners answered the 4-option multiple-choice question about what question both speakers had been asked, as in the previous studies.

Results

Dodge Detection. Listeners’ ability to identify the question asked of the second speaker was again impacted by our manipulation, $\chi^2(2) = 8.50$, $p < .02$. As in Study 1, listeners were generally able to identify that the question asked of the second speaker was about healthcare when he answered the correct question, whether he answered it well

(84%) or poorly (84%). Recall in both conditions was significantly higher than when he answered a similar question, where just 68% recalled the actual question, $\chi^2(1) > 5.36$, $ps < .03$, again replicating H1. Of the 32% who answered incorrectly in the similar condition, 24% incorrectly believed that the speaker had been asked about healthcare.

Interpersonal Evaluations. Evaluations of the second speaker were impacted by our manipulations, $F(2, 272) = 5.26$, $p < .01$. Replicating H5, evaluations of the speaker did not differ whether the speaker provided a good answer to the correct question ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.13$) or to a similar question ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.28$), $t(188) = .45$, $p > .65$. Evaluations of the speaker who answered the correct question but did so poorly, however, were significantly lower than both other conditions ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.12$), $ts > 2.51$, $ps < .02$. Thus, supporting H6, speakers who made an effort to answer the correct question – but did so poorly – were rated less positively than those who made no effort to answer the correct question, instead answering a similar question well. Ratings of the first speaker did not vary by condition, $F(2, 272) = 1.81$, $p > .16$.

Table 2: The impact of similarity and fluency on dodge detection and interpersonal ratings (Study 3).

	<u>Condition</u>		
	Correct (<i>Delivered Fluently</i>)	Similar (<i>Delivered Fluently</i>)	Correct (<i>Delivered Disfluently</i>)
Interpersonal Ratings (<i>SD</i>)	3.31 (1.13)	3.24 (1.28)	2.78 (1.12)
% Recalling the Actual Question	84%	68%	84%

Study 4: A Practical Intervention for Increasing Dodge Detection

Studies 1 through 3 documented some of the underlying causes and social consequences of dodge detection. In Study 4, we test an intervention that could be used in real-world situations where dodges occur to increase dodge detection: posting the text of the question asked of the speakers on the screen during their answers. Indeed, this strategy has recently been employed by the television media during some political debates. This intervention also provides a naturalistic example of one of our earlier manipulations; in Study 1, participants provided with a detection goal – those whose attention had been diverted from a social evaluation goal toward evaluating the content of the speaker’s answer – showed improved dodge detection. We expected that posting the text on the screen would serve a similar attentional function, shifting their focus from merely evaluating the speaker on social dimensions to reminding listeners to evaluate the relevance of the answer offered, thereby increasing dodge detection.

In conditions in which the text of the question did not remain on the screen, we expected to again replicate H1: listeners who heard the speaker answer a correct question would be more accurate at recalling the actual question asked than listeners who heard the speaker answer a similar question. We also test one final hypothesis in Study 4:

H7: Posting the text of the question on the screen during the speakers' answers will increase dodge detection.

Method

Participants. Listeners ($N = 288$, 68% female, $M_{age} = 47.0$, $SD = 11.3$) completed the study online. They were recruited using an online survey company that compensated participants with an online currency.

Procedure. In this study, listeners watched the same video clips used in Study 1. As in Study 1, all clips began with a question about education for the first speaker, which this speaker answered. Listeners were then randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (dodge: correct, similar) X 2 (text on screen: absent, present) between-subjects design. As before, listeners either watched the second speaker answer the correct question (about healthcare) or a similar question (about the illegal drug problem). As in the other studies, the second speaker's response was identical across all condition, always about healthcare. In addition, some listeners watched the videos with the text of the questions present on the screen during the responses, while others watched with the text absent.

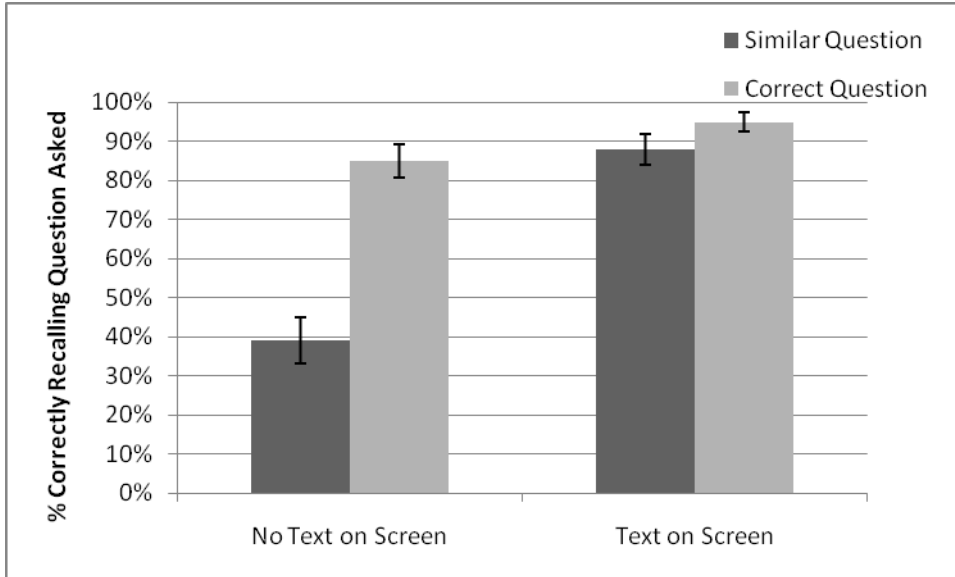
Following the video, participants were redirected to a new screen which did not have either images from the debate or text; as in Study 1, listeners were asked to recall the questions the speakers had been asked using the same 4-option multiple-choice questions.

Results

Dodge Detection. H7 predicted that posting the questions asked of the speakers on the screen while they delivered their answers would increase dodge detection. This was confirmed: listeners who heard the second speaker answer a different question than the one he was asked were much more likely to recall the actual question asked when the text was posted on the screen (88%) as opposed to when it was not (39%), $\chi^2(1) = 35.7, p < .001$. When the questions were absent from the screen, listeners were again more likely to identify the second speaker's actual question when he answered the correct question (85%), than when he answered a similar question (39%), $\chi^2(1) = 31.0, p < .001$, replicating H1. Consistent with the above studies, of the 61% of listeners who failed to correctly recall the question asked of the second speaker, 44% believed he was asked about healthcare. When the text was posted on the screen, however, respondents who watched the second speaker answer a similar question were able to recall the actual question (88%) as well as those who watched him answer the correct question (95%), $\chi^2(1) = 2.4, p = .10$.

As predicted, posting the text of the question on the screen – and therefore diverting attention toward dodge detection – significantly decreased the second speaker's ability to successfully dodge questions.

Figure 2. The impact of posting question text on dodge detection.



Note: Bars signify one standard error.

General Discussion

We might expect that when people dodge a question by answering a different question, listeners would both notice the dodge and rate the dodger negatively. To the contrary, we found that listeners engaged in their default goal of socially evaluating speakers did not rate speakers poorly when they dodged a question by answering a similar question – a lack of disapproval that went hand-in-hand with their failure to detect that the speaker had dodged. We proposed, and offered evidence in support of, two key factors in dodge detection: the attentional goal of the listener, and the similarity of the answer to the actual question. We demonstrated the role of goals by showing that when listeners were given a direct goal to attend to the relevance of speakers' answers to the questions they were asked (Study 1), or their attention was drawn to the speaker's answers by posting the text of the question on the screen (Study 4), dodge detection increased. We documented the role of similarity by showing that, although answering a similar question often went undetected (Studies 1, 2, 3, and 4), answering a question that is egregiously dissimilar increased dodge detection (Study 2). Finally, we explored the interpersonal consequences of successful and unsuccessful dodges: Listeners rated speakers who answered a similar question as positively as those who answered the correct question, but rated those who answered a dissimilar question and those who answered the correct question in a disfluent manner more negatively (Studies 2 and 3).

We focused on two factors that contribute to the failure to detect dodges, but future research should explore other factors that contribute to the phenomenon. Given that attentional deficits underlie the impact of both goals and similarity, other factors that impact attention to messages are also likely to impact dodge detection. One clear

possibility – of particular relevance to political debates but also of wider relevance – is the inherent motivation of listeners to detect dodges. For example, we might expect that individuals who are more politically involved are more likely to detect politicians' efforts to dodge. While our studies were not designed to test this question, in Study 1 we did assess whether participants had voted in the 2008 Presidential election, a proxy for political involvement. Interestingly, a logistic regression revealed no evidence of an interaction between voting and dodge detection, Wald (1) = 0.20, $p > .65$; voters and non-voters were equally likely to fall victim to dodges. Still, we expect that a finer-grained approach to political involvement – for example, measuring people's partisan affiliation – would impact detection: We would predict that a Democratic voter might be more likely to detect a Republican attempting to dodge given their motivation to disapprove, whereas a Republican voter might be more likely to detect dodge attempts by Democratic candidates. More broadly, whenever listeners are more motivated to gain correct information – a reporter needing an answer before a filing deadline, or an employer seeking critical information for an imminent presentation – dodge detection will be enhanced.

Our findings offer new insight into research exploring the impact of Gricean norms in communication. Whereas much of the previous research in this area has explored whether and how deceptive communication violates these norms (e.g., Burgoon et al., 1996; McCornack, 1992), we explore how listeners' assumptions about the relevance of speakers' answers sets the stage for speakers to choose not to answer the actual question they were asked without negative consequences. We show that listeners' tendency to adopt a default goal of evaluating speakers on social dimensions leaves them

susceptible to dodges. At the same time, however, we show that when dodges are detected – when listeners notice that speakers have violated listeners’ assumption of relevance, as when they answer questions that are too dissimilar – listeners rate them more negatively for their attempt to dodge.

In addition, our results add to the growing literature on people’s surprising unawareness to changes in their environment in two ways (Simons & Chabris, 1999; Simons & Levin, 1998). First, we extend inattention blindness to an interactional domain, showing that people not only fail to detect changes to their environment, but also fail to detect changes in their conversations. Second, we extend change blindness research into the domain of person perception. Listeners’ blindness to question dodging allows speakers to avoid the negative interpersonal costs of answering questions they would rather not answer, yet still be perceived as having answered the questions they were asked. Thus this “conversational blindness” allows people – speakers in our studies, but more broadly people in their everyday conversations – to seamlessly dodge questions without detection, and without penalty.

From a practical standpoint, we identified several strategies for counteracting these limitations. The results of Study 4, for example, suggest that a practice occasionally used by television networks during political debates may increase dodge detection among listeners. Indeed, recall of the question when the speaker attempted to dodge by answering a similar question more than doubled, from 39% without the text to 88% with the text. This is not only statistically significant, but practically significant. Given concerns that voters are uninformed or misinformed, and the many calls for increased education of voters – from politicians and pundits alike – these results suggest that very

simple interventions can dramatically increase the extent to which voters are focused on the substance of politician's answers rather than their personal style (Shenkman, 2007; for discussion of the consequences for public policy of uninformed and misinformed voters, see Caplan, 2007). At the same time, however, we expect that not all question summaries are created equally. The question summaries posted during political debates are often overly vague (i.e., "The Economy"), a vagueness that ironically might facilitate question dodging when the question answered is similar to that vague summary, but different than the question actually asked.

In many real-world situations, even such uncertain interventions are unlikely to be feasible: It would undoubtedly be awkward to hold up a sign indicating the specific question you expected an acquaintance to be answering, for example. Most troublingly, the low rates of recall in our experiments are, if anything, overestimates of people's ability to detect dodges because we presented listeners with a forced-choice four-option question – giving them a 25% chance at the right answer. Obviously, this forced-choice prompting does not arise naturally in the world. Accordingly, increasing dodge detection in everyday interactions may be no easy task. At the same time, however, we note that while we have focused on the negative aspects of failing to detect dodges, constant monitoring of potential dodges may be undesirable during many interactions. For example, successful dodging may prevent needless social friction in low-consequence interactions, as when someone asks coworkers for their opinion on a new outfit. In addition, dodge detection goals may be particularly harmful when people engage in creative, wide-ranging conversations. Such exchanges are typified by people making connections that are objectively irrelevant to the immediate question at hand (De Bono,

1968). Still, our results suggest that in many cases, dodges cause sought-after and relevant information to go unspoken, with little awareness and few consequences.

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Appendix: Scripts Used in all Studies

Q1: What do you see as the major factors that need to be addressed regarding the American Education System?

A1: I'm glad you asked me about this. When I think about America's future there are so many important pressing needs, and education is the root of America's future. When every child in America receives a good education, our country will advance even further to lead the world technologically and productively. The first two factors that need to be addressed are getting the kids to stay in school through motivation and positive role models and ensuring that the time spent in school is not wasted and the curricula in schools are advanced. Too many children are not being motivated to achieve. Instead, they are motivated only to do the minimum. We need to motivate our kids. Teachers should act as mentors and friends, giving students a sense of self-worth and accomplishment. Parents need to encourage their kids to do the best they can and instill values and hard work and achievement in them. Parents and teachers can act as positive role models, but so can other adults that children have access to, people like actors and even politicians. If we demonstrate that working hard pays off, children will be more motivated to stay in school. In terms of the curricula, schools across the country are teaching entirely different things. A child should be able to get the same education across the country. Further, an education should be practical. Students should learn the skills necessary to go on to college or to get a job. We need to make sure that classrooms are productive places and teachers cover material so that our students have the most knowledge possible when they graduate from high school and enter the world.

Q2: What are your main concerns about the way in which Americans receive healthcare?

Q3: What are your main concerns about the rising drug problem in America?

Q4: (Study 2 only) What are your main concerns regarding the War on Terror?

A2: I am glad you asked me about this. There are so many challenges facing America today. Many of our problems have arisen because too many Americans cannot afford the care that they need. Costs are always increasing and if you do not have insurance, certain necessary procedures can be out of the question. Even if the government were to distribute aid, it would be difficult to determine to whom and how much. As the costs of care rise, it becomes more and more difficult for the government to pay for this care for so many people. Individual costs go up and insurance costs go up. While most employers provide insurance, increased costs will have negative effects on this provision as well, which will undoubtedly lower the number of insured Americans. It seems to me that the primary problem is the cost of healthcare and we need to address the problem by developing new technologies and processes to lower the costs. Once we have lowered the costs, we can begin to address the larger issues of distribution of aid and revamping the systems that are already in place. However, before we lower the costs, my main concern is that Americans are not receiving the healthcare that they all need because they are not financially able.

RE: 2010-0422 - JEP: Applied

Dear Professor Rogers,

My co-author and I thank you and the three reviewers for your helpful comments on our manuscript, which pushed us to strengthen both our conceptual account and our empirical support for that account through both rewriting and the addition of two new studies. We believe that the attached revised manuscript is much improved as a result of the feedback, and are pleased to resubmit it for further consideration.

Before responding to the points raised by you and the reviewers, below is a brief overview of the most substantive changes:

Theoretical framing. The feedback highlighted that our framing was far too narrow, and directed us to some relevant and helpful areas of communications research. As you and the reviewers suggested, we have reoriented our research so that it is situated in the context of Gricean conversational implicature, Information Manipulation Theory, and Interpersonal Deception Theory, as well as inattentive blindness. This is evident in the introduction to the manuscript, as well as in the introductions to each individual study. To briefly summarize, we suggest because that listeners' attention is often drawn toward social goals (Do I like this person?) rather than detection goals (Is this person answering the question?) – coupled with their assumption that speakers will follow Gricean norms and offer relevant answers – listeners are vulnerable to failing to notice that speakers are answering the wrong question. We propose, and offer evidence in support of, two key factors that contribute to dodge detection: the attentional goal of the listener, and the similarity of the answer to the actual question. This is summarized on pages 4-6 and page 24-25 of the current manuscript.

Two new studies. The revised manuscript includes two new studies, each of which offers evidence for our proposed account. The new Study 1 examines how shifting participants' attentional goals impacts dodge detection: we show that while giving participants a social goal or no goal causes failures in dodge detection (because participants are evaluating the speaker on social dimensions rather than trying to detect dodges), shifting their attention to the content of the speakers' answers increases dodge detection. In the new Study 4, we followed your and the reviewers' suggestion to remove the pilot study – which tested the impact of leaving the text of the question on the screen – from the General Discussion, and conducted and report a larger full version of the study (pp. 20-23). This new intervention study offers further support for the critical role of attention in the frequency of dodge detection.

In the remainder of this letter, we first address the consensus concerns you raised in your letter, and then address remaining concerns specific to particular reviewers.

1. Insights into the phenomenon - the studies provide little direct evidence about the mechanisms of the underlying phenomenon and the potential complexity of the effect - what are the critical variables that influence the magnitude of the effects, for example?

As you can see in the revised manuscript, we conducted two new studies that we believe test critical variables – *attentional goals* and *similarity* – that shed light on the mechanisms of the phenomenon. Study 1 shows that explicitly focusing the attention of listeners on the goal of socially evaluating the speaker results in dodge detection rates that are indistinguishable from those that occur without an explicit goal, consistent with our interpretation that the default social goal of listeners diverts attention away from dodge detection; importantly, Study 1 shows that when attention is focused on the goal of assessing the relevance of the speakers’ answers, dodge detection increased, offering support for our contention that blindness to dodging is, in part, the result of misdirected attention (pp. 7-12). Study 4 offers further support for the role of attention by demonstrating that drawing attention to the question asked of the speaker – in this case, by posting text of the question on the screen during the answer – increases dodge detection (pp. 20-23). Finally, Study 2 tests our proposed second critical variable that influences dodge detection: the similarity of the answer to the actual question. We show that while answering a similar question can go undetected, attempting to answer a question that is too dissimilar triggers dodge detection.

2. The theoretical underpinnings for the research are underdeveloped. Change blindness is used as an explanatory construct but you need to explore and describe the mechanism in more depth to provide support for this conclusion. In general, the introduction needs to consider additional possible theoretical explanations for the findings and make clear how your research is testing the purported mechanism(s).

3. You need to link your research with the communications literature on deception. Reviewers 2 and 3 provide some relevant references as a starting point.

We respond to these two concerns together because they both informed our sharpening of our theoretical account. As you will see in the revised manuscript – and described on the first page of this letter under “Theoretical framing,” we now situate dodge detection in the literature on Gricean norms and past research on deceptive communication (i.e., Interpersonal Deception Theory and Information Manipulation Theory), including citations to the references suggested by Reviewers 2 and 3. As you will see in the introduction to the revised manuscript, we lean heavily on this work (especially pages 3-5). We were also fortunate to find that it affirmed our selection of a forced-choice dependent variable (page 10).

Finally, we also added a section to the General Discussion (p. 25-26) where we outline the specific contributions our research makes both to the literatures on deceptive communication and inattentive blindness, again linking our empirical findings to previous research.

4. Additional details about the stimulus materials are necessary for readers to understand more fully the differences between the messages and to be able to characterize the nature of the messages being used. (Please ensure that the appendix materials are complete.)

We apologize for the incomplete Appendix that accompanied the original submission; all of the questions and answers are now included in the Appendix. The transcript included in the Appendix includes: the question asked of the first speaker and the first speaker's answer, as well as the three different questions asked of the second speaker and the second speaker's answer. Studies 1, 3, and 4 used video with audio, while Study 2 used audio clips; scripts were identical across all studies, regardless of mode.

5. Provide more details about the participants and the recruitment process.

We have provided basic demographics on participants in all four studies now (pp. 8, 14, 18, and 21).

6. A number of your effect sizes are rather small. What are the real practical implications of this research?

We have tried to outline and emphasize the practical implications of our research – including the size of our effects – more clearly in the current manuscript, in three ways.

First, the new Study 4 – the fuller version of the pilot study we reported in the General Discussion of the first paper – is explicitly designed to test a real-world practical intervention for increasing dodge detection: leaving the text of the question on the screen.

Second, we added a section to the General Discussion (p. 26-27) in which we discuss the significance of our results from Study 4, as part of a broader discussion of the practical implications of our research. As we note, the effect of the “text on screen” manipulation is large, with dodge detection when the speaker attempts to answer a similar question more than doubling, from just 39% to 88%; this change in detection is both highly statistically significant, but also, as we argue, highly practically significant. We add references to several investigations of the deleterious impact of uninformed and misinformed voters (for instance, those who fall victim to dodges and fail to obtain desired information), suggesting that the large increase in dodge detection has implications for voters being better informed.

Finally, while the effects for “text on screen” on recall are quite large, you are correct in pointing out that some of our other recall effects are smaller in comparison. We note, however, that because our primary dependent variable used a four-option forced choice question, the expected rate of recall accuracy due solely to chance was 25%. On p. 27, therefore, we highlight this fact to point out that the accuracy rates we obtain (based on a forced force) is likely substantially higher than the rate of unaided recall – with unaided recall being the norm in nearly all real-world situations.

7. I do not see this journal as the place to present a "pilot test" as you describe it in your abstract and paper. Either present a full-fledged study or remove it (and if it is removed I am not sure the paper will be substantive enough for publication). What makes it a pilot study? Why not report it as a full-scale experiment with testable hypotheses? You want to use these findings to make your final point about a method for mitigating the effects but you do not present the details of the study and the results in any depth.

As noted above, we followed this advice, and reran this pilot study in larger scale and now report the results as Study 4.

8. Avoid using sexist language (she and her are as sexist as he and him) - rephrase your sentences.

We have changed this language throughout.

9. The introduction is rather vague about what the mechanism is that is underlying the effect of interest.

As addressed above in our response to your Points 1, 2, and 3, we have made the hypothesized mechanism much clearer in the introduction, and added two new studies to further test our hypotheses.

10. Also, the specific hypotheses within each study are vague. For example in study one, there is no mention of how the effects should differ from the situation where the political answers the question that was asked. In study 2 the intro and hypotheses are also vague.

In light of this comment, we have numbered the hypotheses and made them explicit in each study (see pp. 8, 13, 14, 18, and 21). We have also tightened the introductions to what are now Studies 2 and 3 (formerly Studies 1 and 2) to make their relevance to our overall account clearer (see pp. 13 and 17).

11. Do you have any other information about the participants such as their education level?

We did not assess education level of our participants, though we agree this would be an interesting potential moderator of some of our effects. We did assess age and gender, however, and have added this information to the description of our participants in each study (pp. 8, 14, 18, and 21).

12. Why didn't you also have the ratings done for the first politician for comparison?

We omitted these for the sake of brevity in the original submission, but have now added the interpersonal ratings of the first politician to the revised manuscript (pp. 16 and 19).

13. Provide age and sex information on your norming sample as well.

As noted above, we have added age and sex information for all participants in the four experiments reported in this manuscript.

14. Use of the term "punishing" seems rather odd - participants rated him lower on certain qualities - you have no way of knowing that they were punishing him for dodging the question. You use this statement in the results of Study 1 and again in the intro to Study 2. However, this is based on your inference about what participants are doing without any direct evidence.

We eliminated use of this word, and now describe these results in terms of positive and negative interpersonal ratings of the speaker, keeping more closely to the questions asked of participants (see pp. 13, 15 and 16, and 26).

15. On p. 7, it is not clear what you mean by the following statement: "suggesting that dodging by answering a wrong but similar question was as effective?" As effective at what? Making the participants like the politician?

We have clarified this phrase on page 16.

16. Need to be much clearer about how you are operationalizing certain effects - in the results you describe things as being "effective" or as a "successful dodge" without specifying exactly what that means.

To address this concern, we now offer a definition and an example of what we mean by a “successful dodge” in the very first paragraph of the paper:

“In the studies that follow we show that dodges can go successfully undetected when a speaker responds to a question by offering an answer to a similar question rather than the actual question asked – provided that the listener’s attention is not drawn to that answer. For example, a debating politician asked about the illegal drug problem in America who instead provides an answer about the need for universal healthcare has engaged in a successful dodge if listeners have both forgotten that he was asked about illegal drugs and evaluate him highly.” (p. 3)

17. Not clear what the following statement means on p. 8: "suggesting that successful dodges allow speakers to sidestep the negative effects of unsuccessful dodges."

This phrase has been clarified in the manuscript on page 16.

18. On p. 10, be precise with your language - phrasing such as "made a mess of it" is simply too casual for this context.

We have eliminated this phrase from the manuscript, which we agree was too casual.

19. You do not measure directly whether participants detected a change - you measure whether they liked the politician and whether they remembered the actual question. These are indirect measures and you need to be more circumspect about the conclusions that you draw from them.

20. Likewise, you do not directly measure whether the politicians were perceived as having answered the questions they were asked. You might have these data but you do not report the errors people made in the recall portion of the task - did they believe the question was about the war on drugs, for example, or did they simply fail to recall the original question? More details about the recall data might be informative.

We respond to these two related concerns together. Throughout the results sections, we have been more careful to state that participants fail to recall the original question, rather than fail to detect a change. In addition, we do in fact have the data about the specific recall errors that participants made, and as you suggest we now report them in every study (pp. 11, 15, 19, and 22). In each study, participants who fail to recall the actual question the speaker was asked when the speaker answers a similar question are very likely to instead be fooled into thinking that this *similar* question was the *actual* question – as reflected in their tendency to select the “similar” question as the one they believe they speaker who dodged was actually asked.

21. We have recently extended the length of our abstracts to 250 words. Please take advantage of this and elaborate your abstract to more fully explain your study. The abstract should include a brief description of the problem under investigation, the essential features of the method (including who the participants were), the basic findings, and the implications for theory and practice.

We have lengthened the abstract to include this information.

We now turn to addressing concerns specific to each Reviewer; when Reviewer’s concerns are reflected in our responses to your concerns above, we point Reviewers to those responses.

Reviewer 1

1) There is very little from an applied perspective that concerns me about the studies. My primary applied concern is that dodging is a more complex phenomenon than the studies capture. Take the political setting investigated in the paper. The answers were a little odd because they were essentially apolitical and something that would likely be agreeable to most of the participants. Many political answers have some partisan flare and this will likely mediate the dodging effects. It

could even be that dodges are more partisan than straight answers. Thus, I think it would be informative if the authors would review variables/characteristics they believe might influence people's perceptions of dodging. This could be done in a particular context like politics, across domains or both.

To address this interesting point, we added a new section to the General Discussion (pp. 23-24) in which we report a subsidiary analysis of the data from Study 1 in which we show that voters are no more likely than voters to detect dodges. In addition, however, we note that it is likely that any motivation to attend more closely to a speaker's answers – including the partisan motivation Reviewer 1 suggests – is likely to increase dodge detection; we call for further research to test these possible moderating variables.

2) Also, I little more information concerning the stimuli would be helpful: Were the video clips of real politicians or were they actors?; How were the scripts generated?; Were the scripts created to be non-partisan?; etc...

We have added more detail about these video clips in the method sections (see pages 7-9, 14, and 18, and 21), as well as including the text of all scripts in the Appendix. We made the text of the second speaker's answer the same in all conditions precisely to avoid concerns about whether different answers might have evoked different reactions (including partisan reactions) from participants.

3) The major weakness of the paper is its theoretical underpinnings. Although the authors successfully use the similarity prediction of change blindness in their studies, I am not too convinced that change blindness (i.e., attention) provides an appropriate or full account of the behavior in the studies.

Please see our response above to the Editors' Points 1, 2 and 3, where we document our reconceptualization of our theoretical account to suggest a role not only for change blindness as a mechanism, but also the influence of Gricean norms and social goals in producing failures to detect dodges.

4) Also, it seems doubtful that change-blindness will scale up to the complexities of the phenomena in applied settings. For instance, it seems that the effects could be a memory interference or hindsight (bias) phenomenon. For instance, a proactive interference account would predict that the original question might be better remembered if the answers were shorter. This is something that could be ecologically tested by determining if dodges are typically longer than straight answers. Because there are several theoretical concepts that could complement the attention explanation, I believe reviewing some additional theories will potentially strengthen the paper.

To the last point here, please see our response above to the Editors Points 1, 2 and 3, in which we describe how we situate our work in theory on not only change-blindness but also Gricean norms of communication. Your hypothesis that shorter answers will lead to increased dodge detection is one we cannot test in our current studies – since one of our

design features was to hold the content of answers constant – we agree that an interesting future direction is to explore what features of answers themselves (such as length) impact dodge detection. Indeed, because our account focuses on the critical role of attention in determining dodge detection, we share the Reviewer’s prediction that longer answers – which would likely strain listeners’ attention– would decrease dodge detection.

Reviewer 2

First, the phenomenon could be tied to communication literature on the strategic manipulation of messages when deceiving (see, e.g., Buller & Burgoon, 1994, on strategic and nonstrategic communication; Burgoon, Buller, Guerrero, Afifi & Feldman, 1996, on interpersonal deception theory and the strategic manipulation of messages; and McCornack, 1992, on information manipulation theory). Dodging is one of the ways in which message evasion/equivocation or violations of manner occur. It could also be discussed in relation to Langer's (1978, 1989) concept of mindlessness, or various models of expectancy violations. In other words, it needs to be better situated in the context of extant literature. It does appear that you are attempting to explain it as a "change blindness" phenomenon. If this is in fact an established construct, then introduce it more fully in the introduction rather than inserting it cryptically in the discussion.

Please see our response above to the Editors’ Points 1, 2 and 3; these references (which we incorporated into the paper) and the push for us to sharpen our theoretical account – integrating inattentive blindness with the above research on communication – were both very helpful.

Second, it is critically important that the various messages be quantified in terms of length, readability, argument quality, linguistic features, language intensity, etc., so that message features themselves are ruled out as an alternative hypothesis. Your Appendix is missing some of the messages, so I as a reviewer could not even make a cursory comparison.

As we noted above in our response to the Editor’s Point 4, we apologize for the complete scripts not being included in the initial submission, which led to some confusion as to our precise methodology. In order to ensure the length, argument quality, linguistic features, language intensity, etc. were consistent across conditions (as the Reviewer points out, these are all important controls), the key design feature of all of the experiments is that the second speaker’s answer was always identical across all conditions (see pages 7-9, 14, and 18, and 21) – the only aspect that varied across conditions was the question asked of the second speaker.

Third, we need more details on how subjects were solicited and what the ostensible purpose of the study was. What was their compensation for participation?

We have added details on participants' recruitment and compensation in each study (pp. 8, 14, 18, and 21).

Fourth, the effect size for Study 1 is quite small. Tell us why these are compelling results.

Please see our response above to the Editor's Point 6, in which we discuss both the effect sizes of our results, as well as why we believe they have compelling implications for real-world issues.

Fifth, it would seem patently obvious that a poorly presented speech would earn low marks. I am not sure why Study 2 tells us anything interesting, so I am asking for a more persuasive justification for its value and validity.

By situating our paper in previous research on Gricean norms of communication, we now frame this study (now Study 3) as involving a violation of the Gricean expectation that a communication will be delivered in an appropriate "manner," therefore comparing the impact of violating the Gricean norm of relevance (our primary aim) to violating another Gricean norm. We believe this change helps to better situate this study within our overall account (pp.2-5, and 18).

Finally, I would put the pilot results in the results section and preface them with an explanation for why they are important. Also, clarify that subjects did not have the screen in front of them when recalling the question. I thought the recall percentage was quite low for the directly answered question until it occurred to me that the recall measure came some time after viewing the presentation.

As we noted in our response to the Editor's Point 7, we conducted the pilot study in larger scale and now report the results as Study 4. In addition, we have clarified that the text was not present on the screen when participants completed the recall question (p. 21).

Reviewer 3

The current paper attributes the effectiveness of dodges to absent mindedness, attentional lapses, and unawareness of environment. I wonder if there is another explanation. When we communicate, we very often do not say exactly what we mean, but people are pretty good at figuring out what we meant regardless. However, this presumption can be exploited. I would suggest that the authors look up HP Grice and the logic of conversation, Steve McCornack and Information Manipulation Theory (especially relevance violations where most of the previous work on evasion or dodging has been done) and on truth-bias in deception (Levine et al., 1999 offers a decent review).

As noted in our response to the Editors' Points 1, 2 and 3, the introduction now presents a sharper conceptualization of our theoretical account, which includes a role not only for

change blindness as a mechanism, but also points to the contributing influences of Gricean norms and social goals in producing failures to detect dodges. As a result, we have both Grice and McCornack's work into the introduction, as the Reviewer suggests.

In sum, we believe that the changes we have made in response to the feedback offered by you and the three reviewers have helped us to both sharpen the theoretical framing, and add new studies that offer clear tests of our account. We thank you and the reviewers again for the time you have devoted to our paper, and look forward to hearing from you.

Best,

Todd Rogers