

ICIR Scholar Spotlight



Q & A

WHAT MADE YOU INTERESTED IN YOUR FIELD?

The starting point for me was when I decided I wanted to get a graduate degree. At the time I was running a business, and I hoped that a masters education would leverage me in the work place. I originally planned to get an MBA, but I stumbled onto a master's of communication degree. I went to my mentor to find out the difference between the degrees, and he said "the best way to think of it is one is applied and the other one you get to ask questions." My entire life I have asked questions, and I like finding answers to questions, and I realized that I wanted to be a researcher. I've learned how to balance the two – I like to ask questions about applied things. I'm very interested in questions about business and people's lives.

Dr. Darrin Griffin

Dr. Griffin obtained his bachelor's and master's degrees from The University of Texas at Austin and earned his doctorate from the University at Buffalo, State University of New York. During his time in Buffalo, he worked as a research assistant at the FBI Training Academy in Quantico, VA. He later served as an assistant at the Buffalo Field Office on the white-collar crime squad.

Dr. Griffin's research focuses on interpersonal communication contexts - especially deception. Recently, he co-authored the second edition of a textbook on lying and deception; it is the only textbook on the topic currently available for classroom use.

Recent publications & research work include:

- Pederson, J. R., **Griffin, D. J.**, Fan, M., & Liu, Y. (submitted for review). Surprise!: Exploring the relational implications of using deception for surprise experiences. *Iowa Journal of Communication*.
- **Griffin, D. J.**, Bolkan, S., Holmgren, J. L., & Tutzauer, F. (2016). Central journals and authors in communication using a publication network. *Scientometrics*, 106, 91-104.
- **Griffin, D. J.**, Bolkan, S., & Goodboy, A. K. (2015). Academic dishonesty beyond cheating and plagiarism: Students' interpersonal deception in the college classroom. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*, 16, 9-19.
- Knapp, M. L., McGlone, M. S., **Griffin, D. J.**, & Earnest, W. (2016). *Lying and Deception in Human Interaction* (2nd ed.). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall Hunt.

WHY IS RESEARCH NEEDED IN YOUR FIELD?

I am an interpersonal communication scholar, and I focus on nonverbal communication and lying and deception. I usually use the area Deaf culture as a way to explore these phenomena. When you think about nonverbal communication and then you think about Deaf people, they use what we would consider to be nonverbal communication, but it's actually verbal communication through sign language. It distorts what most people expect. Similarly, lying and deception is very often thought of as a nonverbal and visual thing. For my dissertation I examined Deaf culture and their perceptions of deception and how it played out visually and linguistically. The field of deception research is needed because we don't know as much as we should. When I really dove into the research on this topic, I realized that at the core there is so much that scholars don't know and what we think we know is based on a lack of understanding. I think we should continue to do research because we don't know as much as we should.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE STEPS TO YOUR RESEARCH PROCESS?

I have to be intrinsically motivated to do a research project. So the starting point for me is the application to my life, someone close to me, or it has to be something that matters – usually the ideas involve relationships, business, or Deaf culture. I design a study that will allow me to look at a couple variables and see how they interact with each other. The ultimate goal is to find a correlation between the variables, but then also develop new questions. I am never satisfied with the answers I find; it leads to more interesting questions. The research process is like a journey, there is no destination, you go where the questions lead you.



WHAT DO YOU NEED FOR YOUR RESEARCH?

I use SPSS, Qualtrics, but some of the unique softwares I use are Linguistics Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) and UCINET. UCINET is a social network analysis software – it creates connections between data. You can examine and answer very interesting questions. One of my Emerging Scholar students, Daniel Hughes, and I used the software to analyze school shooters and their manifestos. What we were asking was are these people copying one another? We read their manifestos and every time they mentioned each other, we made a tie between them. There was a Werther Effect to their behavior.

IS THERE A PARTICULAR CONFERENCE THAT YOU'VE ENJOYED GOING TO?

The conference I go to the most is the National Communication Association (NCA) conference. I've never been to the International Communication Association (ICA) conference, but one of my goals is to go and meet people internationally. International conferences broaden your scope and you find new people to work with. Regional and state conferences are nice because they are small and intimate; the national conference is cool because you get to see everyone you've known for a long time and see what's going on and get new perspectives.

DO YOUR FINDINGS ALTER PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS THAT YOU'VE HAD ON A SUBJECT?

I conducted a study, and the findings didn't surprise me, but it changed the way I thought about the whole question. This particular study was on deception and instructional communication. I asked students how they deceive their professors. I framed deception to the students as effective communication, so it is not a bad, dark thing - it's just part of life. It was anonymous and they laid it out. At first as I was reading everything they said, it made me more skeptical, but then as I tried to grasp why it was happening. I left the paper with this conclusion, which completely changed my world view; people lie because the truth won't work. In a classroom there is a power dynamic, and if the truth won't work, it is because there is a barrier. One way to reduce negative deception in the classroom is to change the rules so the students can tell the truth instead.

WHY DO YOU INVOLVE OTHERS IN YOUR RESEARCH?

I do not have the intrinsic or external motivation to do research on my own. I see research as a social human endeavor, and the reason I do it is because it gives me an opportunity to relate to others who are interested in the same areas as I am. I look at it like a society, no one is a farmer, welder, plumber, and electrician, –no one is everything – and if they are they won't do all these tasks very well. Society is based on the fact a lot of people can get together and do a lot neat things, and I believe research works the same way. There are a lot things that go into research that I am not an expert in, so I want find people who are experts. They help me build the foundation and the framework.