Applicant Deception in Employment Interviews: Prevalence, Ricks and Potential Solutions

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HRMAM Conference
October 28, 2015

Faking in job interviews: Agenda

• What is applicant deception?
  – Introduction & Definitions
  – Prevalence of deception
  – Differentiating Honest IM from deceptive IM (faking)

• Causes and antecedents

• Impact for applicants & Risks for organizations

• Potential solutions
  – Detecting faking?
  – Training interviewers?
  – Probing and follow-up questions?
  – Warning applicants?

WHAT IS APPLICANT DECEPTION?

“My short-term goal is to bluff my way through this job interview. My long-term goal is to invent a time machine so I can come back and change everything I’ve said so far.”
Introduction & Definitions

Employment interview:
- Used far more frequently than any other method of personnel selection (except maybe the resume)
- Extensively researched for decades
- Yet, still "something of an enigma"


Impression Management (IM)
- Behaviors individuals use to influence the impressions others have of them
- E.g., to create a positive impression in the minds of interviewers
- Used extensively by job applicants
  - 97.5% of applicants use at least one tactic
  - with an average of 37.25 tactics used per interview


Main types of IM tactics:
- Self-focused: e.g., self-promotion
- Other-focused: e.g., ingratiation
- Defensive: e.g., excuses, justification


Introduction & Definitions

Important to separate...

- **Honest IM**
  - Statements factually accurate and drawn from an individual’s actual work history

- **Deceptive IM (i.e., faking)**
  - Statements factually inaccurate, stretching the truth, or even explicitly made up

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Honest IM</th>
<th>Deceptive IM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Perceived as appropriate by interviewers</td>
<td>• Perceived as inappropriate by interviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May enhance the ability of the interview to make accurate selection decisions</td>
<td>• May detract from the ability of the interview to pick the best candidates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Potential source of predictive validity</td>
<td>• Potential threat to the validity of the interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Applicant deception is...

- ...their attempts to misrepresent themselves during the interview
- ...or an intentional distortion of the responses provided as a way to create a favorable impression

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Prevalence

81% of job applicants admitted telling at least one lie in their last interview…

…with an average of 2.19 lies per interview.


Roulin, N., & Krings, F. (under review). When winning is everything: The relationship between competitive worldviews and job applicant faking.

% of applicants who engaged in faking tactics when applying for a job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 3 (N = 300)</th>
<th>Study 5 (N = 300)</th>
<th>Study 6 (N = 300)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task overemphasized or exaggerated positive attributes</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task fabricated or made up information to maximize their chances of getting hired</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task pretended to present themselves as more agreeable than they really are</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task pretended to be more interested in the job than they really were</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPLICANT DECEPTION: CAUSES AND ANTECEDENTS

Individuals who are more likely to fake in an interview are those...

- ... higher on Machiavellianism
- ... lower on Honesty/Humility
- ... lower on Conscientiousness
- ... with stronger Competitive Worldviews


Roulin, N., & Krings, F. (under review). When winning is everything: The relationship between competitive worldviews and job applicant faking.


The way interviews are conducted can reduce applicants’ opportunity to fake...

- More structured/standardized formats
- Longer interviews
- Panel of interviewers


Causes & Antecedents
### Causes & Antecedents

The way questions are asked can also influence applicant faking...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question type</th>
<th>Post interview (n = 70)</th>
<th>Follow-up (n = 81)</th>
<th>No follow-up (n = 70)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faking behavior</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive IM</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense IM</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legends:**
- IM: Impression Management
- SD: Standard Deviation

### DECEPTION: IMPACT FOR APPLICANTS AND RISK FOR ORGANIZATIONS

"Your resume is filled with half-truths, false praise, exaggeration and unsubstantiated accomplishments. I'd like to have you write our Annual Report..."

### Impact for applicants

What is the impact of applicant IM tactics on interviewers’ ratings?

**Meta-analysis of Effects of Different Types of Impression Management on Interview Ratings**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IM type</th>
<th>k</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2,102</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defensive IM</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2,024</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonsense IM</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,562</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impact for applicants

What about applicant faking only?

Some results suggest a positive impact

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faking tactics used in interview</th>
<th>Probability of receiving a 2nd interview or job offer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defensive tactic (image protection)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No faking</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive tactic (extensive image creation)</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Impact for applicants

Can help compensate when interviewers formed a negative initial impression about the applicant

Risks for organizations

Does faking impact the quality of hiring decisions?

- Limited research in the interview literature!
- But research on faking on tests shows that...
  - Faking can change the ranking of applicants
  - Faking can attenuate the predictive validity of tests
  - If hired, fakers have lower job performance...
  - ... and engage in more counter-productive behaviors
Risks for organizations

In other words, there is a risk that...
... you think you hire...
... but you end up with

FAKING:

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

Potential solution: Detecting faking

"Your accomplishments speak for themselves. Unfortunately for you I'm completely fluent in exaggeration."
Potential solution: Detecting faking

Are people in general good at detecting deception?

*NO!* Multiple studies showing that detection accuracy is usually not better than chance level!

*Why?*

– People are often over-confident in their ability
– … and rely on the wrong cues to deception

Why?

– People are often over-confident in their ability
– … and rely on the wrong cues to deception


Potential solution: Detecting faking

What about in job interviews?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>Study 3</th>
<th>Study 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>154 interviewers</td>
<td>92 interviewers</td>
<td>136 students</td>
<td>48 students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.2 (8.9)</td>
<td>39.9 (9.1)</td>
<td>22.6 (2.8)</td>
<td>22.8 (2.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49% women</td>
<td>52% women</td>
<td>58% women</td>
<td>42% women</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6 (7.6) years</td>
<td>10.4 (7.0) years</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 male students</td>
<td>4 male/4 female employees</td>
<td>4 male employees</td>
<td>4 male/4 female employees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video material</td>
<td>2x5’ mock interviews</td>
<td>4x5’ mock interviews</td>
<td>1x5’ mock interview</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Real-time coding with Noldus Observer XT software

Data coding system:

Each IM tactic is associated with a specific key on the keyboard.

Applicants/Interviewers press the appropriate button when they used/think the applicant used a specific tactic.

Data collection for applicants/interviewers:

Applicants and interviewers coding recorded by the software at the exact time associated with the use of each tactic.

Self-promotion

Image protection

Image creation

…
Potential solution: Detecting faking

Actual Detection vs. Chance Level (pseudo-dyads)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Correct detection</th>
<th>Chance level</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study 1 – Recruiters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest IM</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>t(154)=6.29, p &lt; .01</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faking</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>t(154)=5.00, p &lt; .01</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>t(154)=7.8, p &lt; .01</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 2 – Recruiters</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest IM</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>t(92)=2.25, p &lt; .05</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faking</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>t(92)=2.64, p &lt; .05</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>t(92)=2.43, p &lt; .05</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 3 – Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest IM</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>t(136)=6.95, p &lt; .01</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faking</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>t(136)=10.02, p &lt; .01</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>t(136)=11.47, p &lt; .01</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 4 – Students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honest IM</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>t(48)=.61, p = .54</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faking</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>t(48)=.53, p = .58</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>t(48)=.45, p = .65</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


OK… but what about in real interviews?

- Field study in 10 recruiting agencies
  - 164 applicants interviewed for real jobs…
    - 90 women, mean age: 34, mean interviewing experience: 14 interviews
  - …by 36 professional interviewers
    - 21 women, mean age: 32, mean interviewing experience: 4.5 years, 1260 interviews conducted
  - Two questionnaires completed right after the interview
    - Applicants’ self-reported use of IM and faking
    - Interviewers’ perceived use of IM and faking by applicant

No convergence between applicants’ self-reports and interviewers’ perceptions! … especially for the most deceptive tactics!

Potential solution: Detecting faking

Does “gray hair” make a difference?

- No impact of experience in hiring or number of interviews
- No impact of age
- Students as good as professional interviewers (if not better) in the experiment


Potential solution: Detecting faking

… So what characteristics of interviewers make a difference?

X NOT Intelligence
   (or cognitive abilities)

✓ … but Honesty and Trust

Roulin, N. (under review). Individual Differences Predicting Impression Management Detection in Job Interviews

How does interviewers’ perceptions of applicants’ use of IM and faking influence their evaluations?

- Applicants perceived as:
  ... honestly presenting their qualities (i.e., using self promotion) are rewarded
  ... hiding things from the interviewer (i.e., using image protection) are punished
  ... lying about their qualities (i.e., using image creation) are punished

- But these perceptions are not exactly accurate…

- So… interviewers’ attempts to discount faking seem doomed to failure by their inability to correctly identify when applicants actually engage in faking


Potential solution: Training

Train interviewers to use the right cues to faking!

- Higher frequency or voice pitch
- Eye contact or gaze aversion
- Hand or arm movements or fidgeting
- Looking nervous or anxious
- Nodding or head movements
- Logical structure of the story
- Movement shift or body movements
- Response length and level of details
- Repetitions in the story
- Speech disturbances (e.g., eh…)
- Pausas, hesitations, or silences
- Speaking faster

Potential solution: Probing

Need to better understand how probing influences the use (and effectiveness) of faking

- Initial results: Probing → More faking!
- What about probing type?
  - No probing
  - Neutral probing (“Please tell me more…”)
  - Positive probing (“That’s interesting, tell me more…”)
  - Negative probing (“Frankly, I find that hard to believe, tell me more…”)

Potential solution: Warning

Should organizations use warning instructions?

- Initial results with personality tests: Warning → less faking!
- And in interviews?
  - Early promising results
  - But this forces organizations to fake!
  - Applicants’ reactions?
  - Legal issues?

If you lie, we will eliminate you from the selection process.
Thank you!

Any question?
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