When you select Dr. Jekyll... 

...but hire Mr. Hyde

Understanding and Detecting Impression Management and Faking in Job Interviews

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During the interview, you meet Henry Jekyll…

… but a few months later, you realize that you hired Edward Hyde!

Skilled
Experienced
Personable
Motivated

I should definitely hire him!

Unqualified
Lacking experience
Rude and aggressive
Lazy

How can I get rid of him?
Impression Management & Faking in Job Interviews

- **What is it?**
  - Definitions & Prevalence
  - Distinguishing Honest vs. Deceptive IM (or faking)

- **Who is using it and when?**
  - Individual differences
  - Situational factors

- **Can we deal with it?**
  - IM detection in interviews
  - Are some people better at it?
  - Improvement opportunities
IM & FAKING:
WHAT IS IT?

“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.”
Impression Management (IM)

- Behaviors individuals use to influence the impressions others have of them

- Goals:
  - Create a positive impression in interviewers’ minds
  - Obtain higher evaluations
  - Increase chances to get the job

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Definitions & Prevalence (2)

Main types of IM tactics:

**Self-focused**
- e.g., self-promotion

**Other-focused**
- e.g., ingratiation, praising

**Defensive**
- e.g., excuses, justification

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Definitions & Prevalence (3)

Impact of IM tactics on interviewers’ ratings:

- **Self-focused**
  - e.g., self-promotion
  - $r = .26$

- **Other-focused**
  - e.g., ingratiation, praising
  - $r = .13$

- **Defensive**
  - e.g., excuses, justification
  - $r = .12$

Definitions & Prevalence (4)

IM is used extensively by job applicants

- **97.5%** of applicants use at least one tactic in their last interview...
- …with an average of **37.25 tactics** used per interview

- **81%** admitted telling at least one lie in their last interview...
- …with an average of **2.19 lies** per interview

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Honest vs. Deceptive IM

Important to distinguish...

- 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


# Definitions & Prevalence

| % of applicants who engaged in (some) faking tactics in their last interview |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| 🇺🇸 | 93% |
| 🇨🇭 | 90% |
| 🇩🇪 | 89% |
| 🇪🇸 | 90% |
| 🇬🇷 | 93% |


Honest vs. Deceptive IM (2)

Honest IM

- Perceived as appropriate by interviewers
- May enhance the ability of the interview to make accurate selection decisions
- Potential source of predictive validity

Deceptive IM (faking)

- Perceived as inappropriate by interviewers
- May detract from the ability of the interview to pick the best candidates
- Potential threat to the validity of the interview

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IM & FAKING:
WHO IS USING IT & WHY?

“Your résumé is bloated with half-truths, false praise, exaggeration and unsubstantiated accomplishments. I’d like to hire you to write our Annual Report.”
Who is using it and can we reduce it?

- Interpersonal skills
- ATIC
- Personality
- CWs/ Competitiveness
- Organizational culture
- Organizations’ investments in making IM/faking risky
- Capacity
- Motivation
- Perceived opportunity vs. risks
- Honest IM
- Faking

Individual differences and IM

Age & Experience

Honest IM

Faking

Individual differences and IM (2)

“Traditional” Personality Traits

- Honesty
- Emotionality
- Extraversion
- Agreeable
- Conscientiousness
- Openness

Honest IM

Faking

Bourdage, J., Roulin, N., & Tarraf, R. (under review). "I'm Just That Good": Development and Validation of a Measure of Honest Impression Management in Employment Interviews.
Individual differences and IM (3)

The “Dark Triad” of Personality

Individual differences and IM

Competitive Worldviews

Honest IM

Faking


In Summary

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

- ... less experienced
- ... lower on Honesty/Humility
- ... lower on Conscientiousness
- ... lower on Extraversion
- ... higher on the “Dark Triad”
- ... with stronger Competitive Worldviews
In Summary

In other words, there is a risk that...

...you think you hire...

...but you end up with
Situational factors and IM (2)

Interview Format

Situational factors and IM (3)

Question Type

Tell me about a time…
Imagine the following situation…
I see that you worked for ABC…
Do you prefer to work…

Honest IM
Faking

IM & FAKING:
CAN WE DEAL WITH IT?

“Your accomplishments speak for themselves. Unfortunately for you I’m completely fluent in exaggeration.”
Let’s Start with a Little Test…

Question: “Tell me about a project for which you were in charge of managing or leading a team.”
Was the candidate honest or not?

WHAT YOU HEARD

[...] I took the brunt of the work and calling about 50 of these companies, and if my subordinates had any questions or anything like that, I was there to answer them for them. [...] So... I ended up calling the companies and as a result, we had about half of the companies that we called, so about 25 companies came out and we were able to engage about 75%, so about 800 out of the 1200 [...].

THE REAL STORY

[...] I needed to delegate about 40 companies that we were looking at to the 5 members in our team... dividing it up [...] So what I did is I ended up splitting this 40 companies and giving them out to people and being a support system [...] So as a result, we have about 10 of the companies to come out and we were able to engage at least 300 of the resident students that passed through the career fair [...].
IM detection in interviews

Are people in general good at detecting deception?

Base on deception research:

- **NO!** Multiple studies showing that detection accuracy is usually not better than chance level! (avg. = 54%)

- Why?
  - People are often *over-confidence* in their ability
  - … and rely on the *wrong cues* to deception

**IM detection in interviews (2)**

What about interviewers?

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

**IM detection in interviews**

**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.

**Real-time coding with Noldus Observer XT software**

# IM detection in interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HR Professionals</th>
<th></th>
<th>Students</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Chance</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Chance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>detection</td>
<td>level</td>
<td>detection</td>
<td>level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Honest IM</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faking</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overall</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Honest IM</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faking</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overall</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Study 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Honest IM</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faking</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overall</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Study 4</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Honest IM</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faking</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overall</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Actual Detection vs. Chance Level (using pseudo-dyads)*

IM detection in interviews (5)

OK… but what about in real interviews?

- Field study in 10 recruiting agencies in Switzerland
  - 164 applicants interviewed for real jobs…
    - 98 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

# IM detection in interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Applicants’ self-reports</th>
<th>Interviewers’ perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-promotion</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Deceptive ingratiation</td>
<td>-.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Image protection</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Slight image creation</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Extensive image creation</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Are some people better at it?

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

Are some people better at it? (2)

What about cognitive abilities, personality, or trust?

- Average IM detection (37%), only slightly higher than chance level (i.e., .33%).

- None of the three key variables individually predicted IM detection

- Significant Cognitive ability x Trust interaction

- But small effects (total $R^2 = .062$)

Improvement opportunity #1
Relying on the right cues

- Blinks
- Eye contact
- Smiling
- Nodding
- Head movements
- Clamping hands
- Hand gestures
- Tapping hands
- Speech errors (e.g., eh…)
- Speaking faster
- Talkative
- Pauses or silences

Improvement opportunity #2
Focusing on response content

Using Criterion-Based Content Analysis

- CBCA is based on forensic psychology research
- Sum of 14 indicators (e.g., logical structure, quantity of details, contextual embedding, description of interactions)
- Significantly negatively associated with faking when job applicants answers with a “story” format
- CBCA-based judgment can identify fakers with 63% accuracy (vs. 50% for chance level)
Improvement opportunity #3
Warning instructions

“I will be asking some questions that have been adapted from an assessment designed to measure honesty. A lot of research does show that by analyzing the responses to these questions, you can effectively identify how truthful the responses were. So be honest with me.”

- Reduces applicant use of faking tactics
- No impact on applicant reactions (e.g., justice perceptions)
- Potential risks:
  - It forces organizations to fake!
  - Legal issues with rejected applicants?

Improvement opportunity #4
Post-interview verifications

- Highlights the importance of verifications
  - Reference checks
  - Background checks

- …before making a final hiring decision

For more research-based advice on interviews...

Understand what is *really* happening in a job interview

...whichever side of the desk you are sitting.
Thank You

YOU LOOK GOOD ON PAPER, BUT HOW DO I KNOW YOU AREN'T LYING ABOUT YOUR SKILLS?

YOU SHOULD HOPE I AM LYING.

STUDIES SHOW THAT PEOPLE WHO EXAGGERATE THEIR CREDENTIALS TEND TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE ONCE HIRE.

THAT'S BECAUSE MIS-LEADING PEOPLE IS A VALUABLE BUSINESS SKILL.

FOR EXAMPLE, I MIGHT NEED TO CONVINCE OUR CUSTOMERS THAT OUR PRODUCTS ARE BETTER THAN THE COMPETITION.

OR I MIGHT NEED TO DUPE SOME IDIOT INTO LEAVING MY CUBICLE SO I CAN CONCENTRATE.

ANYONE CAN LEARN TECHNICAL SKILLS, BUT LYING IS AN ART FORM.

HE DOESN'T HAVE AN HONEST BONE IN HIS BODY. PERFECT. I'LL TELL HUMAN RESOURCES TO SEND HIM AN OFFER.