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The order of faking

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The order of faking

by

Brett Lawson Wallace

A thesis submitted to the College of Psychology and Liberal Arts of
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Abstract

Title: The order of faking

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Prior research has yet to look at the impact of cognitive ability assessment's position on applicant faking behavior. To fill in this gap in research, this study looked to examine the effect of placing cognitive ability assessments before and after personality and job-related questions. Interspersed among these questions, were items that assist in predicting faking behavior. One-hundred-seventy-two participants were recruited through Amazon Turk to fill out a pseudo-job application for a customer support manager position. The results of this study showed that applicants that received the cognitive assessment prior to the personality and job-related questions overall engaged in less faking behavior. The implications of this is noted in the discussion section.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Many organizations use selection tools such as interviews, cognitive ability tests, biographical data, and personality assessment. The assessment process is an important part of the recruitment process and most organizations use these procedures to find candidates that they believe to be the best for a position. Faking can occur during many of these assessments, with most research focused on faking in the job interview, biographical data, and personality assessment (Birkeland, Manson, Kisamore, Brannick, & Smith, 2006; Lautenschlager, 1994; Martin, Bowen, & Hunt, 2002; Melchers, Roulin, & Buehl, 2020; Schudlik, Reinhard, & Müller, 2020; Sisco & Reilly, 2007). This leads to organizational concerns about the use of these types of assessments in the hiring process and their validity.

The use of personality assessment tools for the recruitment process increased greatly in the 1990s across the globe (Ryan, McFarland, Baron, & Page, 1999) with the UK, in particular, using it for close to 40% of all management applicants (Shackleton & Newell, 1991). Gardner and Martinko (1996) noted that around three million people took the Myer's Brigg Typology Indicator annually. Building on this, recruiters tend to rate psychological tests as a very important tool for the process, often mistakenly believing that personality tests are more important than cognitive ability tests (Rynes, Brown, & Colbert, 2002). The Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology reported that 14% of employers used personality testing, though 29% indicated that they used various forms of

psychology assessment (“How Many U.S. Companies Use Employment Tests?”, n.a.). Today, personality testing is a \$500 million industry, with growths of 10 to 15% reported (Harrell, 2017). The prevalence of personality assessments should indicate the importance of ensuring its validity. Unfortunately, it seems that job applicants seem to intentionally inflate their personality scores based on a meta-analysis by Birkeland et al. (2006).

Generally, biodata can be acquired through either an interview or through answering a questionnaire. Like personality tests, detecting faking when gathering biographical data can be difficult (Graham, McDaniel, Douglas, & Snell, 2002; Melchers et al., 2020). More importantly, when applicants misinform organizations about their biographical data, it is rarely about topics such as family, hobbies, and other job-unrelated areas. The most common areas that are inaccurate are job-relevant areas relating to job performance, such as work experience (Becker & Colquitt, 1992).

Cognitive tests are also used during the job assessment process and are resistant to faking and are generally a good addition to the job assessment process (Truxillo & Bauer, 2010). Unfortunately, the effect of cognitive ability tests on other aspects of the job assessment process is unknown. Some research has been done to look at the impact of fatigue caused by cognitive tests on other assessments (Strober & Deluca, 2013). However, Walmsley and Sackett (2013) postulated that the impact of tests like cognitive ability tests may cause uncertainty on the individuals taking the test and cause the test taker to assume that incorrectly

answering items may cause or be at a factor for failure in a job recruitment process. This leads to a concern on the impact that cognitive ability tests may have on other tests that are considerable faked. Currently, the impact of perceived failure and difficult cognitive assessments on an interviewee's willingness to fake during a personality assessment or job interview is understudied. But the belief that performance on one part of an assessment will result in a lower likelihood of getting hired could result in efforts to increase scores on other parts of the assessment. For example, if test-takers take a cognitive ability test first, it could act as a signal that they need to fake on subsequent sections.

Due to the prevalence of cognitive, biodata, and personality assessments being combined for assessing applicants, it is important to know what impact the sequencing of cognitive assessments may have on faking behavior. This is especially true due to the increasing use of online assessments for job applications. While faking does not appear to differ between offline and online assessments (Grieve & De Groot, 2011; Grieve & Hayes, 2016), many studies that compared the two modes rarely looked at how cognitive assessments, personality, and biodata interacted simultaneously, let alone if increased stress caused by cognitive assessments would impact those results. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the sequencing of cognitive ability tests on faking behavior during online assessments in an applicant simulation.

What is Faking

Generally speaking, faking behavior is when an individual engages in deception during the recruitment process (Griffith & McDaniel, 2006; Tett & Christiansen, 2008). More specifically, it is the distortion of information in an interview or on tools that assess biodata and personality to increase the probability of a favorable outcome. Other definitions of faking include engaging in socially desirable responses to distort answers on an assessment (Kiefer & Benit, 2016). Social desirability is the attempt to make a favorable impression and appear to be desired in some way or form.

This type of deception can take the form of faking good and faking bad (Griffith & McDaniel, 2006). Faking good is the attempt to make oneself appear more favorable while faking bad is an attempt to make oneself appear less favorable. While faking bad is more common in clinical settings and is studied as a form of malingering (Demakis, Gervais, & Rohling, 2007), in job applications individuals usually engage in faking good behavior to increase their chances of being hired. Faking good has a strong relationship with socially desirable responding (Wiggins, 1966). Given this relationship, social desirability measures are often used to determine if an individual is faking during an assessment.

Alliger and Dwight (2000a) found that while personality tests were more resistant to forms of faking than integrity tests, they are still reasonably vulnerable to faking. Even though they noted resistance to faking, Alliger and Dwight (2006) did note that there were incidents of strong effects of faking. Supporting this,

research has shown that applicants that fake still seem to score more favorably than those that do not. Viswesvaran and Ones (1999), in a meta-analysis of laboratory and field faking studies, found that the effect sizes for faking on the Big Five personality traits was between .61 to .88 standard deviations, while the effect sizes of social desirability were faked 1.65 standard deviations. In a more recent study focusing on job applicants and incumbents, Birkeland et al. (2006) estimated the effect sizes faking across the Big Five to be between .11 to .45 standard deviations. This is a particularly severe issue due to these tests being used by organizations for recruitment at a fairly high rate.

Regardless of how faking is defined, it appears to be prevalent in applicant assessments. The engagement in these behaviors can be very prevalent during the interview process (Melchers, Roulin, & Buehl, 2020). Donovan, Dwight, and Schneider (2014) found that at least half of job applicants surveyed admitted to engaging in faking behavior on goal-setting assessments. Griffith, Yoshita, and Chmielowski (2007) found that between 30% and 50% of individuals tended to engage in faking behavior when administered conscientiousness assessment and recommended that the use of interviews be used in conjunction with these tools. This may not be an effective tool to mitigate faking, though, as McDaniel, Douglas, and Snell (2003) also found that a large portion of participants engaged in faking behavior during the interview process. In unstructured interviews, applicants engage in faking behavior 85% of the time (McDaniel, Douglas, & Snell, 2003). The results are not much better in structured interviews, with applicants engaging

in faking 53% of the time. It is not just in-person evaluations that have individuals faking.

McDaniel, Douglas, and Snell (2003) estimated that 52% of resumes were distorted and 47% of general personality inventories were faked. A literature review by Melchers et al. (2020) found that multiple studies reported over 50% of interviews had some form of image distortion or faking by the applicant. Levashina and Campion (2007) reported that over 80% of applicants engaged in some form of faking during an interview process. Taken together, this suggests that faking commonly occurs in many different assessment instruments.

Why Faking is Important

The research reviewed above suggests that faking results in a mean shift in test scores and is prevalent, but there is considerable debate about whether the impact of faking is important (Rosse, Levin, & Nowicki, 1999). Barrick and Mount (2011) found that the use of impression management techniques did not negatively impact the results of their other personality measures, as the deception had little impact on performance and the results of the personality assessments remained strong predictors of important criteria. Hogan, Barrett, and Hogan (2007) indicated that they found little evidence of faking and that those distorting their scores could be easily identified. This has led some researchers to conclude that faking does not have harmful effects.

On the other side, there is evidence that faking can be problematic for decision-making in applied contexts. Donovan, Dwight, and Schneider (2014) found that faking significantly affected the results of the assessment tools used and brought into question the validity of personnel selection procedures as they found that a majority of those that were identified as engaging in faking behavior acquired the job for positions with low selection ratios. That is, fakers typically rose to the top of the applicant pool, resulting in a disproportionate number of fakers being selected when fewer people were hired. This is important as in the study over 50% of those assessed were found to not have engaged in faking behavior.

There is some evidence that faking degrades the validity of interviews and other assessment tools. When applicants engage in impression management-related behaviors they tend to be rated higher by interviewers, but their evaluations by their supervisor tended to be lower and their performance evaluations were generally not related to these interview tactics (Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003). This indicates that just because the interviewee engaged in impression management in the interview, they weren't necessarily engaging in the same level of impression management with their supervisors and that the level of impression management displayed was not related to their job performance. Another aspect is that those that engage in impression management may not actively engage in behavior that is detrimental to an organization, but they may also use techniques that will place themselves in a favorable position that may prevent or minimize consequences for poor performance.

Impression management can predict varying relationships an individual may have with their supervisor. Zivnuska, Kacmar, Witt, Carlson, and Bratton (2004) found that those that engage in impression management behavior tend to go along with office politics and get high evaluations from their supervisors. Taking all this together it seems that faking behavior may at best lead to no loss of performance for an organization but may also lead to significant negative consequences for the organization. Wayne and Liden (1995) found that those that engage in impression management tended to be described as someone who is pretending to be like the supervisor when in actuality the individual that engages in this behavior is widening the gap.

There is a notion that those that fake during an interview may have skills that are easily transferable in jobs that rely heavily on social skills. While in some ways a logical assumption, research has shown the opposite to be true. Rosse, Levin, and Nowicki (1999) found that those that engage in faking behavior perform poorly in customer service positions and frequently engage in behavior that is not beneficial to the organization.

In addition to the potential problems that are the result of not hiring a person qualified for the position, other negative factors may be the result of hiring an individual that engaged in faking behavior. In particular, there are counterproductive workplace behaviors (CWB). CWB are behaviors that negatively impact the productivity of an organization and can be directed at an individual or the organization itself. CWB can be anything from stealing office supplies,

intentional destruction of property, and assault (Sackett & DeVore, 2001).

Peterson, Griffith, Isaacson, O'Connell, and Mangos (2011) found that faking during interviews had a strong relationship with CWB. More severely, McLarnon, DeLongchamp, and Schneider (2019) found that those that engaged in extreme levels of faking also engaged in the most extreme levels of CWB.

One possible reason for this relationship is the personality variable of neuroticism. Neuroticism has been correlated with faking behavior (Jackson & Francis, 1998). CWB is also correlated with Neuroticism (Bolton, Becker, & Barber, 2010). Bowling, Burns, Stewart, and Gruys (2011) found that other personality variables do moderate the relationship between Neuroticism and CWB when looking at various populations. For the hotel workforce, there seems to be a moderately strong relationship between neuroticism and CWB. Given Neuroticism's apparent relationship with overall productivity and faking, it seems that it is important to ensure that faking is caught as it can lead to a reduction in performance for a variety of reasons if it is not. McLarnon et al. (2019) also found a relationship with both neuroticism and CWB, though that population was only undergraduate students. While there are differences in the strength of the relationship between neuroticism and CWB, this can likely be explained by the different work populations that were sampled. Overall, Neuroticism should be seen as an adequate predictor of CWB. Indirectly, this shows that faking itself should be seen as a predictor of CWB and thus company performance.

Models of Faking

Griffith and Peterson (2011) noted that for close 80 years little theory was used to explain why the faking behavior occurs and that a large focus of the research was about whether faking impacted the measures or techniques to accurately measure what they purported to and whether the measures accurately predicted desired outcomes. At the time the most supported model was socially desirable responding, or overly positive self-descriptions. Griffith and Peterson (2011) noted that to better predict faking, researchers must first understand what it is and why it occurs. This naturally means that more refined models must be created.

Multiple models can be used to explain faking behavior. Roulin, Krings, and Binggeli (2016) proposed signaling theory as a model to predict faking behavior. Signaling theory is the use of information presented to make decisions. Another way of saying it would be that the environment is “signaling” the individual on what behaviors would be most appropriate in the given situation. In the context of faking, individuals would use non-verbal cues picked up by an interviewer or phrasing of questions to pick up on what would be the best answer to questions or what things would be best to say to improve how they are perceived. For example, socially desirable test content may act as a signal to applicants, reminding them that their answers will be evaluated and used to determine the outcome of their testing.

McFarland and Ryan (2006) incorporated the Theory of Planned Behavior (Theory of Planned Behavior) into their model of faking. The basis of the Theory of Planned Behavior is the intention to do something. That is, faking is the result of an individual's intention to fake. In terms of faking, the Theory of Planned Behavior is composed of three factors that influence intention: attitudes towards faking, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes towards faking refer to the individual's personal beliefs regarding engaging in faking. Subjective norm refers to the societal norm or more narrowly a group norm regarding faking behavior. The perceived behavioral control refers to the individual's perceived ability to fake. For example, if the applicant perceives faking as a positive behavior to engage in, they will have a higher intention to fake. Once all these factors pass a certain threshold faking behavior should occur.

While these models are functional, Goffin and Boyd (2009) noted that the current models of faking do have areas that need improvement. His general model looked at a combination of individual and contextual factors that influence the motivation and perceived ability to fake. Individual factors that he noted included morality, personality, and skills. His contextual factors included perceived need, opportunity, and consequences of faking. These last areas are particularly important as one popular model used to explain faking is the theory of planned behavior.

Theory of Planned Behavior

Goffin and Boyd (2009) developed a general model of faking using the Theory of Planned Behavior. To summarize their model, it looks at the perceived

ability to fake and the motivation to fake based on contextual and individual characteristics. If the factors that make up the motivation to fake and perceived ability to fake are high enough then the individual will attempt to engage in faking behavior. A variety of variables can occur that could make up these contextual and individual variables. Ellingson and McFarland (2011) would further develop the model by Goffin and Boyd (2009) by looking at faking behavior through the lens of the Values-Instrumentality-Expectancy theory, in which they primarily focused on the motivation to fake aspect.

The theory of planned behavior is the intention to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). There are three aspects of this theory that are used to predict behavior: attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitudes refer to the opinion an individual has regarding that behavior. Subjective norms refer to the public pressure to perform that behavior. Perceived behavioral control refers to how much belief that the person has that they can do the behavior.

As noted in the study by Ajzen (1991), attitudes are very poor at predicting specific behavior, but when combined with personality characteristics they become very good at predicting aggregates of behavior. Belief Salience was a term mentioned in Ajzen (1991). To summarize, it is the relationship between an individual's attitudes about behavior and their salient beliefs towards it. These salient beliefs are the beliefs that determine an individual's actions. There is a problem though with this. These beliefs are hard to elicit and could be

"contaminated" by what researchers are attempting to do (Conner & Armitage, 1998). There do seem to be ways to avoid the "contamination" but it is a significant problem that researchers face when testing aspects of the Theory of Planned Behavior. For example, researchers seeking to measure attitudes about faking might find it easier to use past behaviors in addition to attitudes measures to more accurately see the impact of attitudes on behavior.

Public pressure is the second area noted by Ajzen (1991). This is determined by the perception an individual has that other people or groups will approve or disapprove of the individual's behavior. One interesting finding regarding public pressure involves the impact reinforcement has on this (Rhodes, Jones, & Courneya, 2002). Indeed, the more social support an individual has the more likely the behavior may be performed. One possible aspect that may lead to an increased chance of faking is the perception that the assessment tools or processes are inherently unfair. Levashina and Campion (2006) noted that experiences from prior and current interviews may increase the applicant's positive opinion on faking.

Perceived control is the last area noted by Ajzen (2012). Simply put this involves a person's perceived ability to successfully follow-through with a behavior. There are two areas of personality that are related to this: locus of control and self-efficacy. Locus of control is the belief people have over their environment and events (Rotter, 1966). External locus of control is the belief that the environment or other factors are what determine what happens to an individual

while internal locus of control is the belief that the individual's actions determine what happens. Self-efficacy is the belief in your ability to perform a task successfully (Bandura, 1977). Simply put, those with high self-efficacy have confidence in their ability to successfully act.

Ultimately, self-efficacy and locus of control could be considered the same construct, with self-efficacy seen as the level of internal locus of control (Gist, 1987). Another important thing to note about self-efficacy is that it can be generated through behavioral modification techniques (Gist, 1987) and as such is something that can be changed over time or through interventions. Self-efficacy has a strong relationship with attitudes and subjective norms, as well as the strength of negative habits, though its relationship to negative habits seems to be explained by its shared variance with other variables (Norman, 2011). Two studies found that belief to follow through with rule-following behavior increased the chance of success (Broadhead-Fearn & White, 2006), which is directly applicable to faking, as applicants are often instructed to “be honest”. In addition to this, self-efficacy determines the likelihood that healthy behaviors will be engaged in (Armitage & Conner, 1999; McCaul & Hinsz, 1993). Overall, it seems that there is sufficient evidence to show that self-efficacy does influence the engagement of positive behaviors as a whole.

One construct related to theory of planned behavior and may be considered a part of public pressure is "subjective norms" (Ajzen, 2012; Conner & Armitage, 1998). subjective norms are a person's determined and socially validated values

attached to a behavior (Conner & Armitage, 1998). While both Ajzen (2012) and Conner & Armitage (1998) implied that subjective norms are separate but parallel to Theory of Planned Behavior, the addition that subjective norms are validated by society implies that public pressure still plays a role, but not necessarily public pressure from the immediate area. This may potentially be explained through the generalization of behavior (Snell, Sydell, & Lueke, 1999) (Guttman & Kalish, 1956) as the situation in one setting may be sufficiently similar in another. Another possibility is the social norms of one non-present group may still apply significant pressure on an individual's behavior.

To summarize, these aspects of the Theory of Planned Behavior help explain the processes that lead to faking. A person's attitudes can determine whether they have any moral qualms towards faking. Relatedly, social pressures can also encourage or provide an incentive to fake during an interview. Lastly, whether or not they believe that they can get away with faking is the last factor that plays a role. More likely, though, all three of these factors combine to reach a threshold that determines whether or not faking occurs.

Signaling Theory

Ultimately, evaluating and planning to fake is important, but triggers that encourage faking and inform of potential strategies that may be effective. For example, Ellingson and McFarland's (2011) model of faking considers both Theory of Planned Behavior and signaling theory. Signaling theory can help explain this. Signaling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011) often involves the

interaction between two parties. One party decides what information that they will send to the other. This other party then decides how to best use this information. This theory has frequently been applying to various aspects of management. Often it looks at how employees, managers, and, most important for this current study, recruiters provide the information to others. Other sources are things like company culture and question phrasing during pre-interview tests. Until recently, a large amount of research has mostly been focused on how management in a company will signal information to stakeholders and investors (Connelly et al., 2011).

Now, though, there has been a growing interest in how signaling theory applies to the application process. More specifically, how job applicants may engage in faking. In terms of faking, it is in many ways a game between a recruiter and an applicant (Bangerter, Roulin, & König, 2012). The recruiter gauges what are the best signals to give and how effective they may be at eliciting the applicant to supply the correct information, while the applicant uses that in the best way they can to make themselves appear more desirable. As Bangerter et al. (2012) further described, it game of adaptations and counter-adaptations and both the recruiter and the applicant send signals during the process. Of course, honest information will be provided, but only if that information is beneficial.

Concerning faking, a significant amount of research has been done that looks at signaling theory in competitive environments. Roulin and Krings (2016) found that when competitive environments are signals to applicants that they need to be a cut above their peers. This effect was most prevalent when they were aware

that they did not have many competitors. One potential avenue noted in a recent study by Roulin and Krings (2019) is that the environment and traits of an organization impacted a willingness to fake on assessments. Some areas that they looked at were competitiveness of an organization impact on willingness to fake. Based on this logic, tests that indicate a level of competitiveness (ex. Cognitive ability tests) can function as a signal to fake.

As noted earlier, signaling theory is a two-way track. In the study by Ho, Powell, Spence, and Perossa (2020), they found that during a competitive interview process applicants will send dishonest signals in an attempt to make them appear more favorable than their competition. The higher the perceived competition the more willing they will engage in it. This is interesting as it is not directly misinforming the recruiter and attempting to cause them to come to an inaccurate conclusion on their own.

An example of how this could be the wording of certain personality questions that are frequently on such tests. Many questions have connotations that very clearly have negative or positive connotations. For example, one common question asks if an individual has mood swings can easily signal that emotional stability is valued as such a question would not be asked if it wasn't. Another way that an applicant could be signaled would be the description of the job, if individuals applying to the job know that interacting with people socially is a significant aspect of the job, they may heavily endorse extroversion traits to further increase their chances of being offered the job.

Current Study

In summation of the previous research, until fairly recently few models could help explain what faking is and why it occurs (Griffith & Peterson, 2011). Two models that gained traction recently have been the Theory of Planned Behavior and signaling theory. Both of these in part is used to explain why and how faking strategies are implemented. Theory of Planned Behavior focuses on the process of how the strategies while signaling theory focuses on the triggers from the environment that can lead to a shift or even initiate faking behavior. One topic Roulin and Krings (2019) looked at was how the culture of an organization can lead to individuals faking. One area that is worth discussing from their study is the impact a competitive environment does increase faking. Specifically, when applicants reviewed job advertisements, manipulations to these advertisements influenced test-takers views of how competitive the organization is. This highlights that applicants are actively reviewing the test environment and drawing inferences about the organization and the testing procedure. Building upon this, past research has seldom looked at the impact that order of assessment tools may have on an applicant's willingness to fake or how the difficulty of cognitive assessment tools may impact faking behavior. Walmsley and Sackett (2013) briefly posited that poor performance on cognitive ability tools may lead to individuals having an increased propensity to fake. Building upon the Theory of Planned Behavior and signaling theory, the inclusion of a cognitive ability tool might serve as a signal that influences the intention to engage in faking behavior.

Prior research in mental health settings has noted that perceived poor performance on cognitive assessment tools led to increased malingering among those assessed. Demakis, Gervais, and Rohling (2007) have shown that those with post-traumatic stress disorder will engage in malingering behavior when they perceive that they have failed or performed poorly on a cognitive assessment tool. The same may be true with faking behavior and performance on cognitive tests. That is, when applicants perceive that they have done poorly on the exam, they may perceive a greater need to distort their responses on other sections.

Given the past research relationship between uncertainty caused by cognitive assessments and future faking behavior in a clinical setting (Demakis, Gervais, & Rohling, 2007), it is expected that perceived poor performance on a cognitive assessment or a negative reaction to the cognitive assessment will lead to increased levels of faking on subsequent personality and biographical assessments.

Hypothesis 1: Personality scores, social desirability scores, and biodata scores will be higher when participants complete these tests after completing a cognitive ability assessment.

Cognitive assessments that were perceived to be of only moderate or easy difficulty will have reduced levels of faking on subsequent personality and biographical assessments. Conversely, personality assessments that were administered before cognitive assessments that were perceived to be difficult will have lower levels of faking. This is expected to be due to an increased need to fake as posited by Goffin and Boyd (2009). To acquire a position after

perceiving to have performed poorly, applicants will need to make up for lost ground in the application cycle.

Hypothesis 2: Participants' performance on the cognitive ability test, their test anxiety, and their perceptions of ease will moderate the relationship between test order and test scores.

Chapter 2: Methods

Participants

This study recruited 172 individuals (138 White, 11 Black, 11 Hispanic, 11 Asian, 1 Other) through Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk). 41% of participants were male. The average age of participants was forty-years-old. Participants were compensated (\$1.00) for participating in the study. mTurk seems to have a solid history with faking studies (Schilling, 2020), though participants seem to fake more frequently when they do it through online platforms such mTurk than through an in-person lab setting (Dickinson & McEvoy, 2021). There are also some concerns as to whether mTurk has honest participants and reliable participants (Hauser, Paolacci, & Chandler, 2019; Kennedy et al., 2020).

Procedure

Participants were recruited for a study of “Applicant Reactions to Employment Testing”. To encourage faking behavior participants will be informed that individuals that score high enough, the top 20%, will earn a 100% HIT bonus (\$1.00). This is based on the research by Alliger and Dwight (2000). They found that participants that were instructed to fake were larger than what was seen in a real-world setting while providing an incentive to fake without providing instructions led to faking behavior that is more comparable to real-world scenarios. While examining faking behavior is the primary purpose of this study, test taker’s attention will be directed to examining their reactions.

For this study, we implemented a 2x1 study design. In this study, participants will be assigned to one of two groups and both groups will complete a three-section assessment. In one group a brief cognitive assessment will occur before a personality assessment and biodata section. In the other group, the cognitive assessment will occur after. After each section participants will provide their reactions to the assessment materials with a note that these responses will not influence who is “hired”.

The HIT was used as an attention check to screen out potential participants. If participants twice were unable to correctly identify what placement to get the bonus, they would be redirected to the end of the study. Sixty-two individuals failed this attention check. Additionally, questions were screened for patterns in responding to the items. In total, one individual was removed due to obvious pattern in responding.

Measures

Personality

This study used the 10-item version of the Big Five personality assessment to assess participant’s scores of Extraversion, Openness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness. In total there will be 50 questions for the personality segment of the questionnaire. Example items include: “I sometimes feel blue” (Neuroticism), “I am comfortable around people” (Extraversion), “I believe in the importance of art” (Openness), “I have a good word for everyone”

(Agreeableness), and “I am always prepared” (Conscientiousness). Each question will be on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. 1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree).

Cognitive Ability Test

The cognitive ability section consists of a section of verbal reasoning and a section of numerical reasoning, taken from the PSI Employee Aptitude Survey. Example items include: “ You have the following list of facts: Chris is a welder. Terry works for Company B. Chris's only child is a girl. Company A makes automotive parts. Company B employs no welders. Chris does not work for Company B. Note if the following statements are ‘True’, ‘False’ or ‘Uncertain’: Chris's son is ill. Chris works for Company C. Terry is a welder. Chris welds automotive parts.” (Verbal Reasoning) and “You have the following numbers listed: 1 4 7 10 13 16 19, which of the following numbers would come next? 20 21 22 23 and 24.” (Numerical Reasoning) Items will be scored to assess the difficulty of the questions. The numerical reasoning section will be composed of 20 items while the verbal reasoning will be composed of three sets of five questions. Participants had three minutes to complete the verbal assessment and five minutes to complete the numerical assessment.

Biodata

This study used the 25 items developed by Yang (2020), adapted from (Anderson, Warner, & Spencer, 1984). These items are sales-related items with half of them reflecting real tasks and knowledge and a half reflecting bogus items. Bogus items reflect fake and knowledge tasks. Example items include: “I am aware

of the American Organization's Salesperson's Bill of Rights” (Bogus Item) and “I have had training in ISO9000 Certification procedures.” (Accurate Item).

Participants will be asked if they have experience with each item and rate each item: yes, no, not sure. Ratings of yes on the bogus items will be used to indicate faking.

Social Desirability

This study used the short-form of Impression Management and Self-Deception scales (Hart, Ritchie, Hepper, & Gebauer, 2015) of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1991). In total there will be 16 questions for each participant. Each question will be on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. 1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree).

This study used the short-form of the test perceptions measures used by Arvey, Strickland, Drauden, & Martin (1990). In total, there were ten items administered three times throughout the assessment for each participant. Each question will be on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g. 1-Strongly Disagree, 5-Strongly Agree). The test had three sub-sections: Test Ease, Comparative Anxiety, and Motivation.

Chapter 3: Results

T-test

Hypothesis 1 was that those that received the cognitive assessment first would score significantly higher on measures associated with faking. To test hypothesis 1, t-tests were performed to compare the means of the group that received the cognitive assessment first to those that received the personality scores first in the Big Five personality measures, Impression Management, Social Desirability, and on the Bogus Items from the OCQ.

A *t*-test showed that there was a significant difference in the means between those that experienced the cognitive assessment first and those that experiences the personality/biodata assessment first (see table “”) in Conscientious scores, $t(167)=-4.443, p<.001$. This relationship was present in Neuroticism, $t(157)=3.756, p<.00$, and Extraversion, $t(170)=-4.586, p<00$. This relationship was not present in Openness, $t(144)=.108, p=.914$, and Agreeableness, $t(148)=-1.493, p=.138$.

A *t*-test also showed that there was a significant difference means between those that experienced the cognitive assessment first and those that experiences the personality/biodata assessment first (see table 1) in Impression Management, $t(152)=-4.268, p<001$ and Social Desirability, $t(146)=-3.890, p<.001$. This relationship was not present in the bogus items used in the OCQ $t(135)=-1.959, p=.052$.

While there were significant results. The direction was different than what was predicted. The overall directions of the results showed that those that received the cognitive measure first were less likely to engage in faking behavior than those that received the personality measure first.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

	Cognitive First		Personality First		<i>d</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
C	4.16	0.47	4.52	0.57	0.688	*
E	2.37	0.59	2.74	0.45	0.706	*
N	2.08	0.61	1.73	0.60	-0.578	*
O	2.71	0.28	2.70	0.33	-0.033	
A	2.77	0.30	2.85	0.34	0.253	
Ease	3.53	.682	3.25	.873	-0.357	
Anxiety	3.99	1.62	3.44	1.48	-0.355	
SD	0.21	0.25	0.37	0.29	0.602	*
IM	0.27	0.28	0.47	0.30	0.661	*
Bogus	1.40	2.80	2.40	3.66	0.307	

Note. n=170-171 C = Conscientiousness, E = Extraversion, N=Neuroticism, O=Openness, A=Agreeableness, SD=Social Desirability, IM=Impression Management, Bogus=Bogus items of the OCQ. * $p < .05$.

Regression

Hypothesis 2 was that there would test ease, perceived performance, and anxiety would have a moderating effect on the relationship between the order of the assessments and the faking outcome measures. Due to the low reliability of the abbreviated test ease items, only one item from the test ease assessment was used (i.e. “I found this test too easy”)

To test this moderated regression analyses were performed to examine the effect for moderation. No evidence for moderation was shown. For example, the moderated regression analysis looking at the interaction between order and test ease at predicting impression management scores was not significant, $b=.006, p=.871$.

Table 2 shows the results of the regression analyses.

Table 2: Regression Analyses

Model	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	β		R^2	ΔR^2
	Impression Management					
1		Order	-0.191	**	0.099	0.000
		Performance	0.000		0.099	0.000
		OrderXPerformance	0.001		0.099	0.000
	Impression Management					
2		Order	-0.203	*	0.099	0.000
		Test Ease	-0.055		0.147	0.048
		OrderXEase	0.006		0.147	0.000
	Impression Management					
3		Order	-0.220		0.099	0.000
		Anxiety	-0.033		0.117	0.018
		OrderXAnxiety	0.011		0.118	0.001
	Social Desirability					
1		Order	-0.163	**	0.085	0.000
		Performance	-0.002		0.086	0.001
		OrderXPerformance	-0.006		0.087	0.001
2	Social Desirability	Order	-0.202	*	0.085	0.000
		Test Ease	-0.044		0.111	0.026
		OrderXEase	0.018		0.112	0.001
3	Social Desirability	Order	-0.120		0.085	0.000
		Anxiety	-0.051	**	0.167	0.082
		OrderXAnxiety	-0.004		0.167	0.000
	Bogus					
1		Order	-0.923		0.024	0.000
		Performance	-0.638	**	0.097	0.097
		OrderXPerformance	0.214		0.100	0.013
2	Bogus	Order	0.258		0.024	0.000
		Test Ease	0.943	**	0.091	0.067
		OrderXEase	-0.573		0.104	0.013
3	Bogus	Order	-1.167		0.024	0.000

		Anxiety	0.055		0.025	0.001
		OrderXAnxiety	0.035		0.025	0.000
1	Conscientiousness	Order	-0.358	**	0.100	0.000
		Performance	0.002		0.108	0.008
		OrderXPerformance	0.043		0.112	0.004
2	Conscientiousness	Order	-0.298		0.100	0.000
		Test Ease	-0.128	**	0.202	0.102
		OrderXEase	-0.021		0.203	0.001
3	Conscientiousness	Order	-0.195		0.100	0.000
		Anxiety	-0.043		0.128	0.028
		OrderXAnxiety	-0.034		0.130	0.002
1	Extraversion	Order	-0.362	**	0.104	
		Performance	-0.034		0.110	0.006
		OrderXPerformance	-0.104	*	0.135	0.025
2	Extraversion	Order	-0.514		0.104	
		Test Ease	0.026		0.123	0.019
		OrderXEase	0.066		0.128	0.005
3	Extraversion	Order	-0.351		0.104	
		Anxiety	-0.029		0.110	0.007
		OrderXAnxiety	0.000		0.110	0.000
1	Agreeableness	Order	-0.073		0.013	
		Performance	0.016		0.014	0.001
		OrderXPerformance	-0.038		0.025	0.011
2	Agreeableness	Order	0.024		0.013	
		Test Ease	0.058		0.034	0.021
		OrderXEase	-0.044		0.042	0.008
3	Agreeableness	Order	-0.037		0.013	
		Anxiety	0.006		0.013	0.000
		OrderXAnxiety	-0.010		0.014	0.001
1	Openness	Order	0.003		0.000	
		Performance	0.029		0.007	0.007
		OrderXPerformance	-0.023		0.012	0.005
2	Openness	Order	-0.067		0.000	
		Test Ease	0.007		0.010	0.010
		OrderXEase	0.031		0.014	0.004
3	Openness	Order	0.058		0.000	
		Anxiety	0.016		0.002	0.002
		OrderXAnxiety	-0.016		0.003	0.003
1	Neuroticism	Order	0.356	**	0.078	
		Performance	-0.033		0.082	0.000
		OrderXPerformance	0.012		0.083	0.001
2	Neuroticism	Order	0.428	*	0.078	

	Test Ease	0.121	*	0.122	0.044
	OrderXEase	-0.035		0.124	0.002
3 Neuroticism	Order	0.051		0.780	
	Anxiety	0.132	**	0.226	0.148
	OrderXAnxiety	0.054		0.230	0.004

Note. n=170-171 p<.05=*,p<.001=.001

Chapter 4: Discussion

Based on the results of this study neither hypothesis can be supported. In fact, there is evidence that the opposite was true in regards to the first hypothesis, that there would be more faking in the group that received the cognitive ability tests first. While there were significant differences for impression management and self-deception between conditions, these significant differences showed those that received the cognitive assessment first were less likely to score higher on these response validity scales than those that received the personality and biodata questions first. The Big Five personality scores also showed significant differences for conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Extraversion. In the study those that had the personality assessment first showed more positive results than in those that had the cognitive assessment first. High scores on the personality scales and response validity scales indicate that the group receiving the personality tests first engaged in more faking than the group receiving the cognitive ability test first.

The pattern of faking across personality traits and response validity scales falls in line with results by Furnham (1997) and Viswesvaran and Ones (1999). In Furnham's study, they found that conscientiousness, emotional stability, and extraversion seemed to be more easily faked than agreeableness and openness. Most notably conscientiousness as noted in his study was the most easily faked, though, in this present study the effect size for conscientiousness and extroversion were comparable. The meta-analysis by Viswesvaran and Ones (1999) on faking

found that social desirability measures were distorted more than personality traits, a pattern that matches my results.

The basis for the hypothesis of this study was that those that received the cognitive assessment first would engage in faking in the personality and biodata questions to compensate for perceived poor performance. Although this was not found, there is may be a reasonable explanation. What potentially happened is that participants who received the cognitive assessment first perceived that their poor performance on the assessment was not recoverable and as such there was no need to endorse behavior that is commonly associated with faking. One thing to note is that the bogus items in bio data showed no significant difference in the endorsement of false items, though the results were in the same direction, with the personality first group having higher scores than the cognitive ability first group.

The simplest interpretation for these results is that the cognitive assessment reduced participants willingness to fake. This does seem to be the case given the results of the testing. This is interesting as this implies that organizations could use cognitive assessments to reduce the amount of dishonest information that they receive from applicants.

Hypothesis 2 focused on whether test taker's experiences moderated group differences. Specifically, I hypothesized that the difference between groups would be greater for participants who performed worse on the cognitive ability test, perceived the cognitive ability test as more difficult, and experienced more anxiety about the cognitive ability test. Although hypothesis 1 was not supported and the

results were in the opposite direct, I still tested to see if these interactions were present. No effect of moderation was present in this study. This ultimately means that there was no evidence to support hypothesis 2. There were main effect effects for test order and the outcome variables associated with faking when both test ease and overall performance were used to test for moderation. When anxiety was used to test for moderation, the main effect for order was no longer present for the outcome variables.

Implications for Faking Theory and Research

While the hypotheses were not supported, my results do provide useful information on the nature of faking. As noted previously, there is little research into the impact of the order of testing on faking behavior in the job application setting. There was prior research in testing order and faking behavior in the field of mental health (Demakis et al, 2007), but the results showed that faking became more prevalent in that setting. It may be important to note the distinction between the two settings. While there is presently no study examining faking in both setting and comparing them, it is reasonable to assume that the perceived need to fake may be different. As noted in the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991), perceived need to fake is an important factor when determining if an individual will be willing to fake. In the context of mental health, typically when an individual is assessed it is to receive services and it is a final chance before they have to wait a significant period of time before trying again. In job applications, there are many opportunities to try again. In this case it becomes whether faking would be a good expenditure of

resources. In the current study, after completing the cognitive assessment, participants could have decided that it wasn't worth these resources. In mental health, faking might be worth it as there are not many other options available. For positions that likely have a sizable number of openings in other organizations, it likely is not seen as critical.

In regard to signaling theory (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011), the signal received may also be different depending on whether poor performance is perceived to have happened in the assessment. The participants in Demakis et al. (2007) likely received the signal that the only way to get the desired outcome is to fake. In this study, the signal of poor performance likely lead participants to believe that faking would lead to a wasteful expenditure of resources and that it would be best to conserve resources for different job. And because this study was conducted on Amazon's mechanical turk, likely it quite literally was for another job after they finished this project.

Limitations and Future Directions

One potential issue that confounds this study is the potential competitiveness of the position. Ho et al. (2020) noted that positions that were more competitive had higher rate of those selected that seemed to engage in faking behavior. In the present study, participant were told that the top 20% based on all three sections (cognitive ability, personality, job experience) would be "hired". Similarly, participants "hired" only received a 100% HIT bonus, which was \$1,00. Due to the position offered in this study not being the most competitive position,

this may explain why the results of this study did not match those of Demakis et al. (2007). Another issue is that while mTurk has shown to be a good tool for research in faking (Schilling, 2020), it does still have issues that may not transition perfectly to actual settings (Hauser, Paolacci, & Chandler, 2019; Kennedy et al., 2020).

This study is also limited in that it only simulated a single position. Specifically, I focused on an entry level customer service manager position. This position was chosen as it would be easily relatable to and has been used for other faking studies. However, it does provide limitations in the generalization of results, as those that are lower or higher level of position may have differing levels of faking. This may difference may also be present in different career fields.

Due to these issues, future research may wish to look at data of actual applicants. Future research could also look at the effect of this on highly competitive positions. Would cognitive assessments occurring first in more competitive positions lead to less faking or would the desire to obtain the competitive position lead to the hypothesized results? It is likely that this data exists among the large assessment companies. Exploration of this data would provide potentially useful information about real world faking behavior.

In regards to the impact that testing the second hypothesis brought, test ease and perceived performance had no moderating effect on the relationship between order of the assessments and faking behavior. One important thing to note was the effect of test anxiety. It seems possible that anxiety had a mediating effect on the relationship between order and faking behavior. Specifically, starting with a

cognitive ability test seems to have increased test-taker anxiety, which could have led to less faking or less effective faking. Future research may wish to look at this.

One important thing to consider for future research is the impact of exhaustion and fatigue on faking behavior. The current study seems to indicate that faking behavior regardless of ease takes more cognitive resources than providing genuine responses. Future research may wish to consider this cognitive “cost” when studying faking behavior.

Conclusion

In summary, we can say with some level of confidence that the order of testing influences the willingness to fake on tool used to assess job applicants. Though, this direction was not the one hypothesized. Those that receive the cognitive assessment first are less likely to fake. There are limitations to this study in terms of job level and competitiveness of the position that future research may wish to address.

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