

Applicant Deception in Selection and Assessment: Causes, Impact, Countermeasures, and Technology-Enabled Threats and Opportunities

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Organisational Psychology
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Before We Start...

Slides available here:

Some images and graphs were created with the help of...



Agenda

- How applicants use deception in selection/assessment?
 - Faking on tests vs. in employment interviews
- What makes (some) applicants fake?
 - Individual differences, competition, and fit motives
- What is the impact of faking?
 - Validity reduction, hiring decision, and workplace outcomes
- What can organizations do?
 - Countermeasures and their effectiveness
- What role can technology play?
 - As a deception facilitator... but also a potential resource

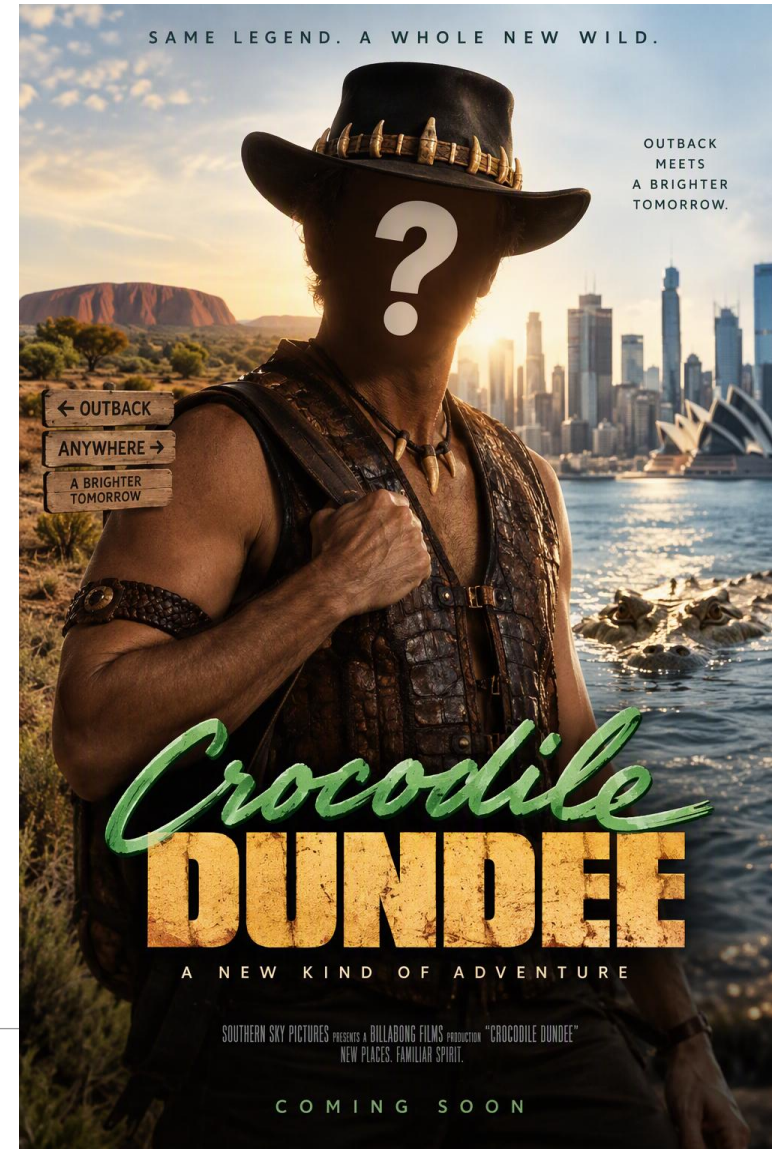


Imagine the following situation...

We are a production team working for Village Roadshow Studios

... in charge of hiring the **best candidate to play the lead role** in our upcoming **blockbuster movie**:

... and we have narrowed it down to three potential candidates...



Imagine the following situation...

* Any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental !



How applicants use deception in testing

Please read each statement and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with it, as it applies to you in general. Please use the following scale for your responses:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
I think that most people like some aspects of my personality	0	0	0	0	✗
I can handle difficult situations without needing emotional support from anyone else	0	0	0	0	✗
When it comes to physical danger, I am very fearful	✗	0	0	0	0

The “**ideal candidate**” for the role would likely answer **like this...**



How applicants use deception in testing

Our three candidates:

----- = What they believe their real/true personality is

———— = The response they provide on the text



	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
I think that most people like some aspects of my personality	0	0	0	0	0
I can handle difficult situations without needing emotional support from anyone else	0	0	0	0	0
When it comes to physical danger, I am very fearful	0	0	0	0	0



How applicants use deception in testing

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How applicants use deception in testing

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Applicants' Deception in Testing: Evidence

Personality Tests:

- Within-subject: Individuals completing a **“Big-5” test** when applying for a job and again (later) in a low-stakes context

	<i>k</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>SD_d</i>	δ	<i>SD_δ</i>
Overall results						
Agreeableness	12	2326	0.48	0.32	0.58	0.34
Conscientiousness	18	3346	0.59	0.47	0.72	0.56
Emotional Stability	12	2327	0.55	0.27	0.65	0.27
Extraversion	13	2490	0.44	0.28	0.51	0.28
Openness to Experiences	12	2357	0.46	0.56	0.55	0.66

d of .50 = Half a standard deviation difference in scores between the two attempts



Applicants' Deception in Testing: Evidence

Personality Tests:

- Two groups: Comparing applicants' (high-stakes) vs. employees' (low-stakes) scores on the **HEXACO**

Trait	Non-applicant		Applicant		<i>d</i>	Sig
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Honesty-humility	3.66	0.44	4.01	0.37	0.86	***
Emotionality	3.02	0.43	2.97	0.35	-0.14	***
Extraversion	3.75	0.48	4.05	0.35	0.73	***
Agreeableness	3.17	0.45	3.60	0.36	1.06	***
Conscientiousness	3.69	0.43	3.99	0.35	0.77	***
Openness	3.54	0.48	3.58	0.41	0.09	**

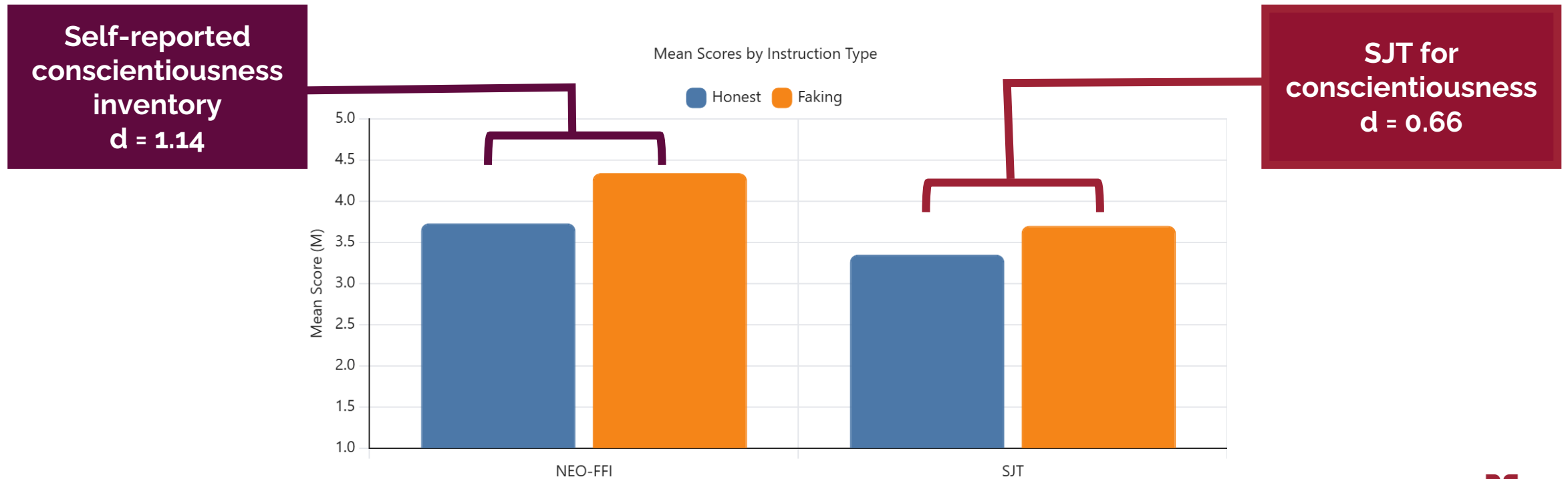
Up to a full standard deviation difference in scores!



Applicants' Deception in Testing: Evidence

Situational Judgment Tests:

- Two groups: Instructed to respond **honestly** vs. **fake**



How applicants use deception in an interview

Tell me about a role where you played a strong, adventurous, fun, and charismatic character...



Of course!
I played **Thor**, the God of Thunder across nine movies in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Thor is known for his **superhuman strength**, his ability to handle the **powerful** Mjölhnir hammer, but also his impeccable **sense of humour**, and his **leadership**...

This character was **beloved by fans** worldwide and I **won several popular awards** for it.

How applicants use deception in an interview



Sure!
I played **Geralt of Rivia**, the main character in the last season of the show The Witcher on Netflix. Geralt is a **strong warrior** who also has **magical powers** and is fighting all kinds of monsters. I took over the role after the actor who played it before left the show. **Fans have loved** how I portray Geralt, and I think I **made the show stronger and more successful**.

How applicants use deception in an interview



Well, I played Ashley, the **lead character** in the HBO show Westworld. He was the **head of security** in charge of managing an entire Western-themed park with humanoid robots. He was definitely a **strong** character, involved in a lot of **action scenes**, for instance regularly having to **fight off** robots. But he was also **funny, smart, and influential**.

I received substantial praise for this role and won **several awards** for this show.

How applicants use deception in an interview



Well, I played Ashley, the **lead character** in the HBO show Westworld. He was the **head of security** in charge of **managing an entire** Western-themed park with humanoid robots. He was definitely a **strong** character, **involved in a lot of action scenes**, for instance **regularly having to fight off robots**. But he was also **funny, smart, and influential**. I **received substantial praise for this role and won several awards for this show**.

Extensive Image Creation



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Slight Image Creation



Of course! I played **Thor**, the God of Thunder across nine movies in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Thor is known for **his superhuman strength**, his ability to handle the **powerful Mjölfnir hammer**, but also his **impeccable sense of humour**, and his **leadership**... This character was **beloved by fans worldwide and I won several popular awards for it**.

Honest Self-promotion



Applicants' Deception in Interviews: Evidence

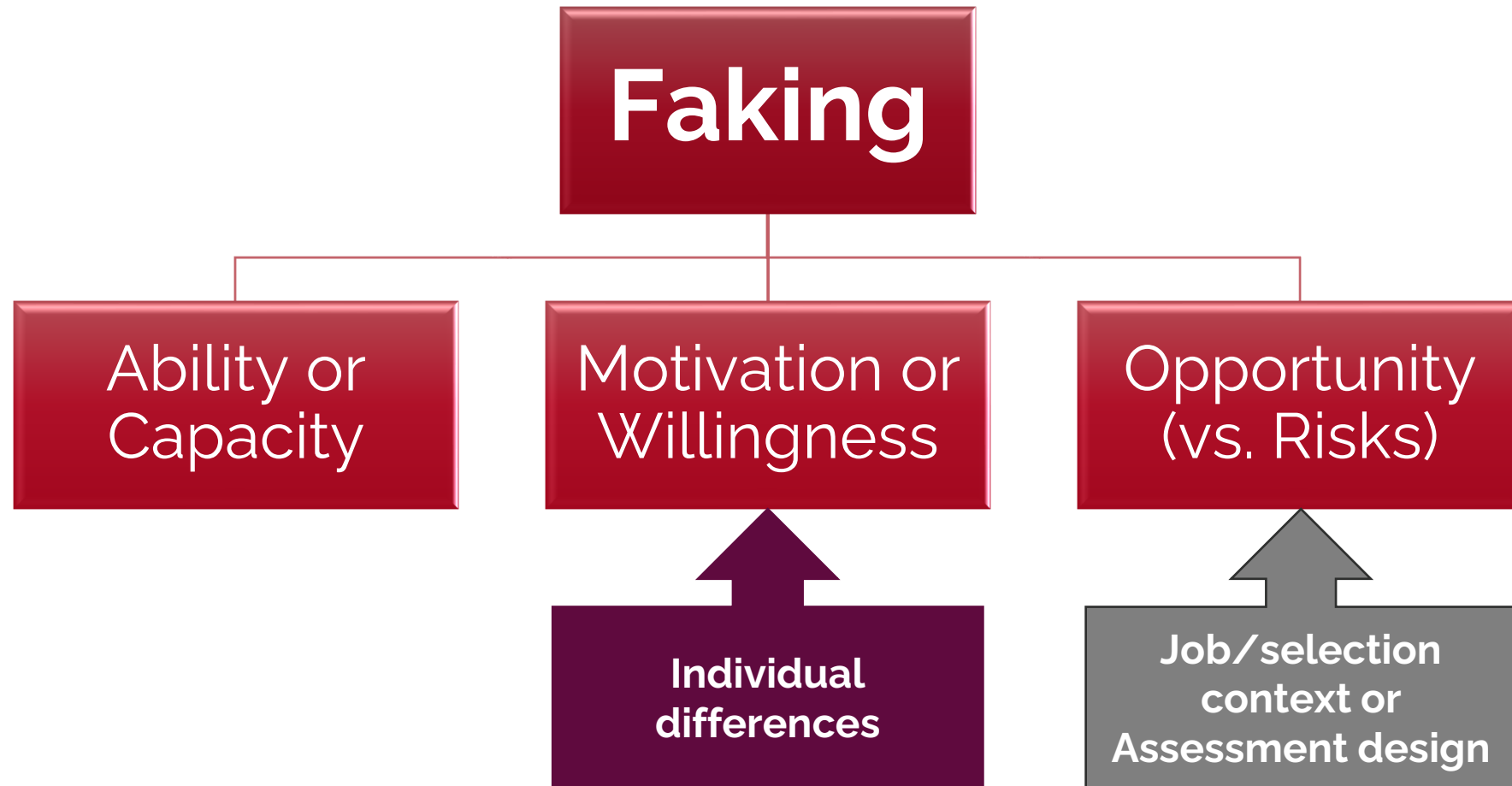
Employment Interviews:

- Percentage of Interviewees who reported that they...

Source		Embellished, exaggerated, etc.	Invented, made-up, borrowed, etc.	Omitted, hid, distanced, etc.	Expressed insincere values, etc.
		Slight image creation (%)	Extensive image creation (%)	Image protection (%)	Deceptive ingratiation (%)
Bourdage et al. (2018, Study 4)		55	17	40	67
Bourdage et al. (2018, Study 5)	 	48	39	49	69
Dürr and Klehe (2018)		53	35	49	76
Levashina and Campion (2007, Study 3)		99	92	96	99
Levashina and Campion (2007, Study 5)		95	80	86	95
Levashina and Campion (2007, Study 6)		85	65	87	77
Roulin et al. (2014)		44	21	40	70



What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?



What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?

Individual Differences:

Higher on
Psychopathy,
Machiavellianism,
and Narcissism

$$r \leq .43$$

Lower on Honesty-
Humility

$$r \geq -.40$$

Higher on
Competitive
Worldviews

$$r \leq .50$$



Male

$$r \leq .33$$

Younger (or less
experienced)

$$r \geq -.33$$

Lower on
Conscientiousness
and Extraversion

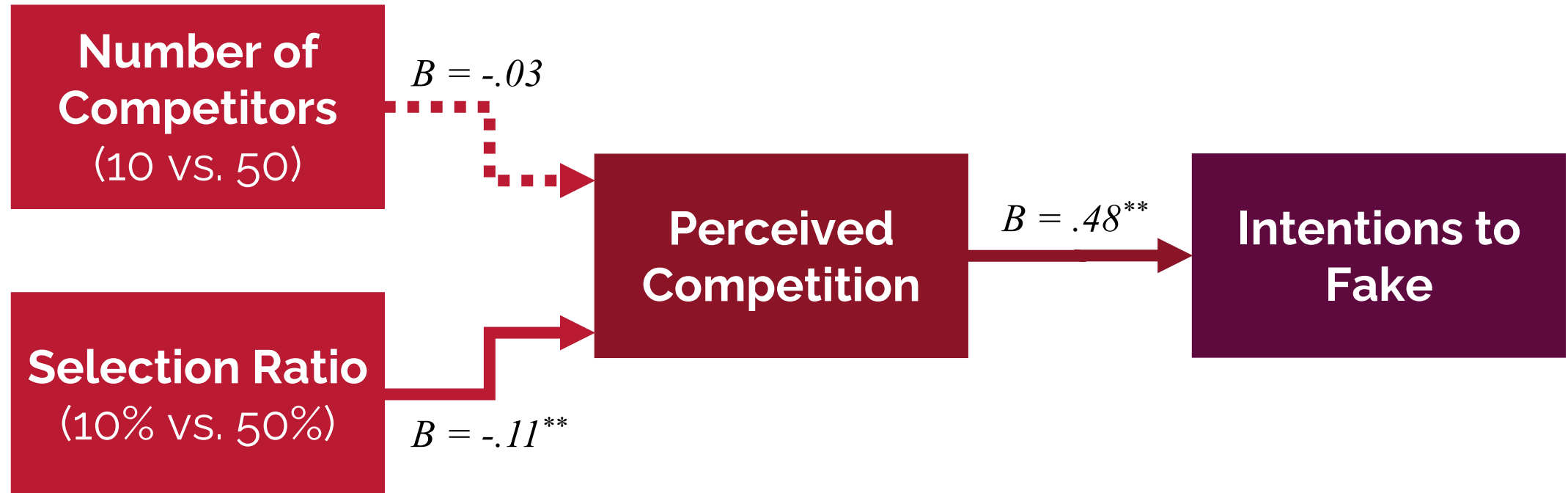
$$r \geq -.34$$

Melchers, K. G., Roulin, N., & Buehl, A. (2020). A review of applicant faking in selection interviews. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 28(2), 123–142. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsa.12280>



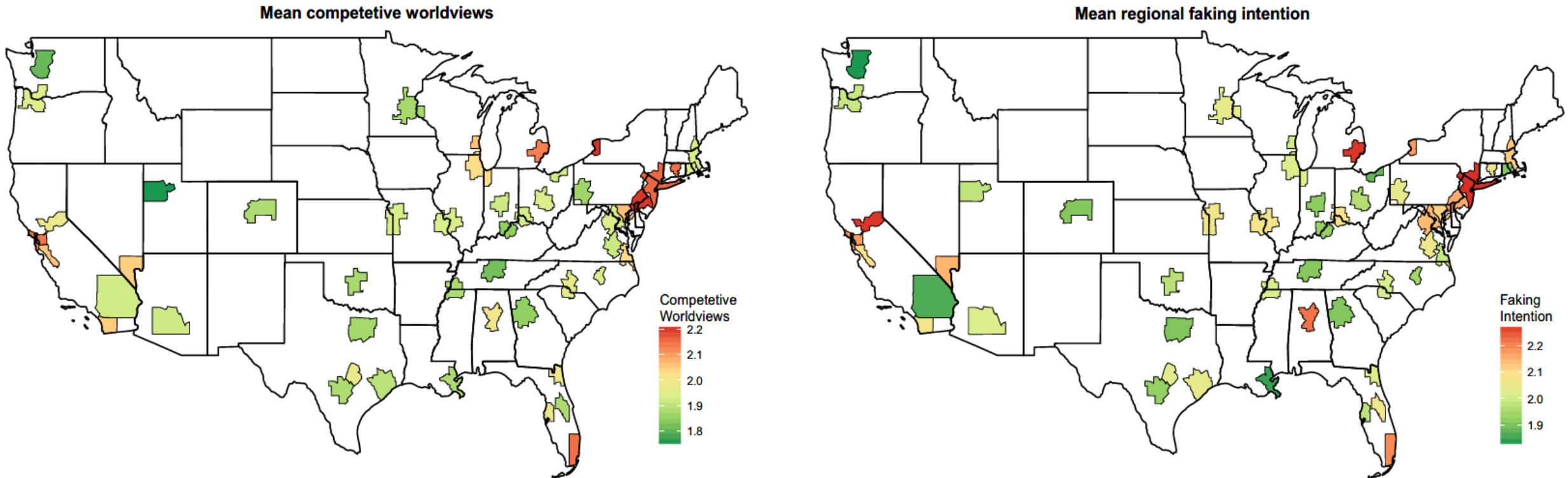
What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?

Competition in the Hiring Process:



What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?

Competition at the Regional Level:

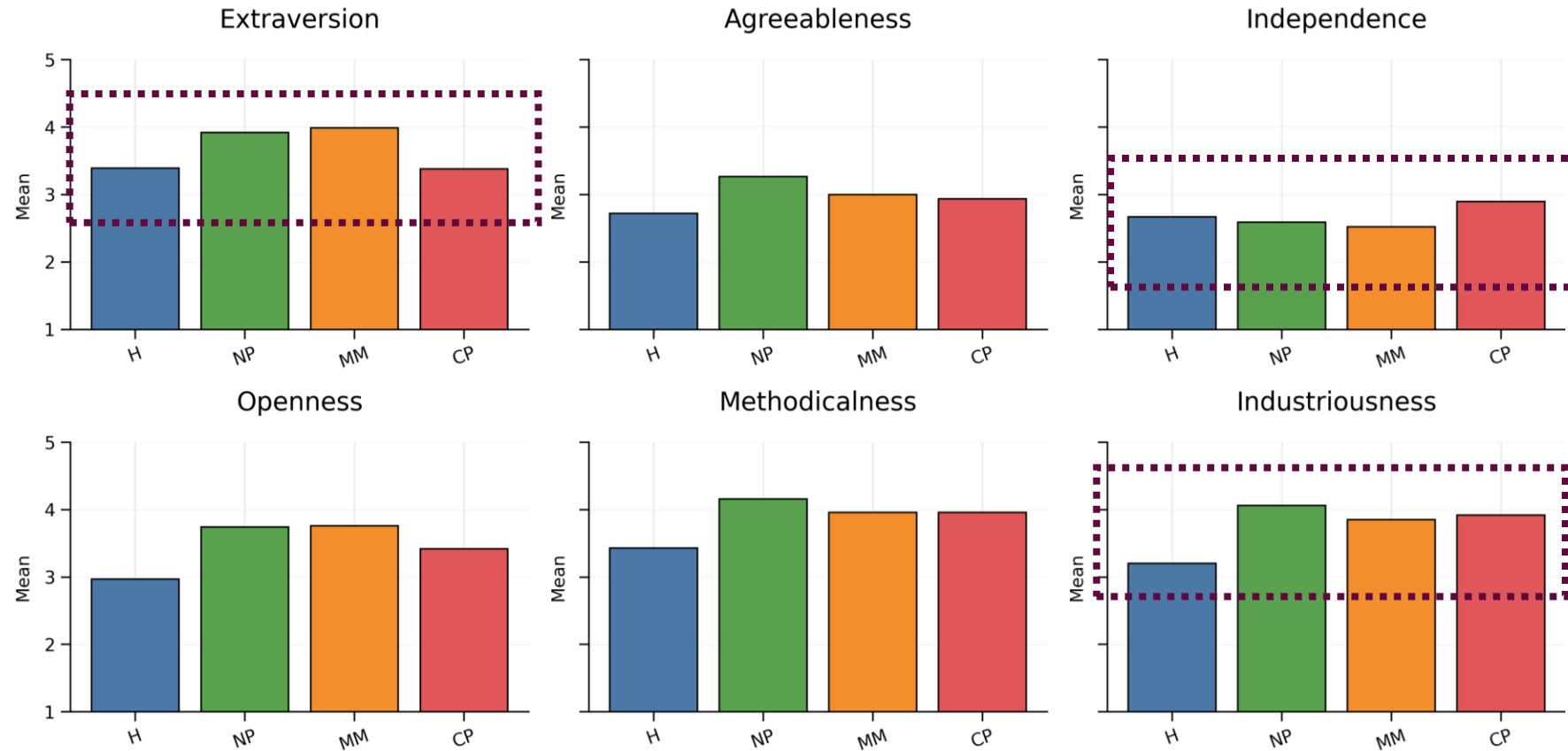


Correlation between regional level of competitive worldviews and faking intentions: $r = .68$



What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?

Faking to Fit Job-Specific Profiles:



Honest condition

Nurse practitioner

Marketing manager

Computer programmer

Tett, R. P., Freund, K. A., Christiansen, N. D., Fox, K. E., & Coaster, J. (2012). Faking on self-report emotional intelligence and personality tests: Effects of faking opportunity, cognitive ability, and job type. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 52(2), 195–201. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2011.10.017>



What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?

Faking to Fit the Organization's Culture:

Competitive Culture



Our Purpose

We will provide branded products and services of superior quality and value that improve the lives of the world's consumers, now and for generations to come. As a result, consumers will reward us with leadership sales, profit and value creation, allowing our people, our shareholders and the communities in which we live and work to prosper.



Although our activities are measured in billions of dollars, we select our people one by one. In a service business, we know that without the best people, we cannot be the best firm.



Bring your A Game - everyday. Prudential is a place for people who find satisfaction in taking on big challenges and coming up with smart answers to tomorrow's questions today. Innovation and high standards are deeply entwined in our company's DNA.



PFIZER'S OWNIT! CULTURE: A CULTURE EMBEDDED IN THE BUSINESS

Pfizer understands that for prospective colleagues, a company's internal culture is as important as its external reputation. With its emphasis on "ownership", Pfizer's OWNIT! culture allows individual colleagues to discover career success at the same time that it drives positive business results.

Collaborative Culture



we respect
and care
for
each other

We work, grow, learn and have fun together. We support and trust one another. We inspire each other. We celebrate diverse perspectives, encourage openness and reward team results.



LIVING OUR VALUES EVERYDAY

In the same way that The Home Depot's products help people build homes and projects, the eight core values we uphold help us build a strong business and culture. Our nearly 300,000 associates share The Home Depot's "orange-blooded" culture, which encourages inclusion, passion and respect both within the company and extending to all parts of our lives.



We offer rewarding careers for people who embody passion, collaboration and courage, who drive innovation, and who want to make the world a better, healthier place.



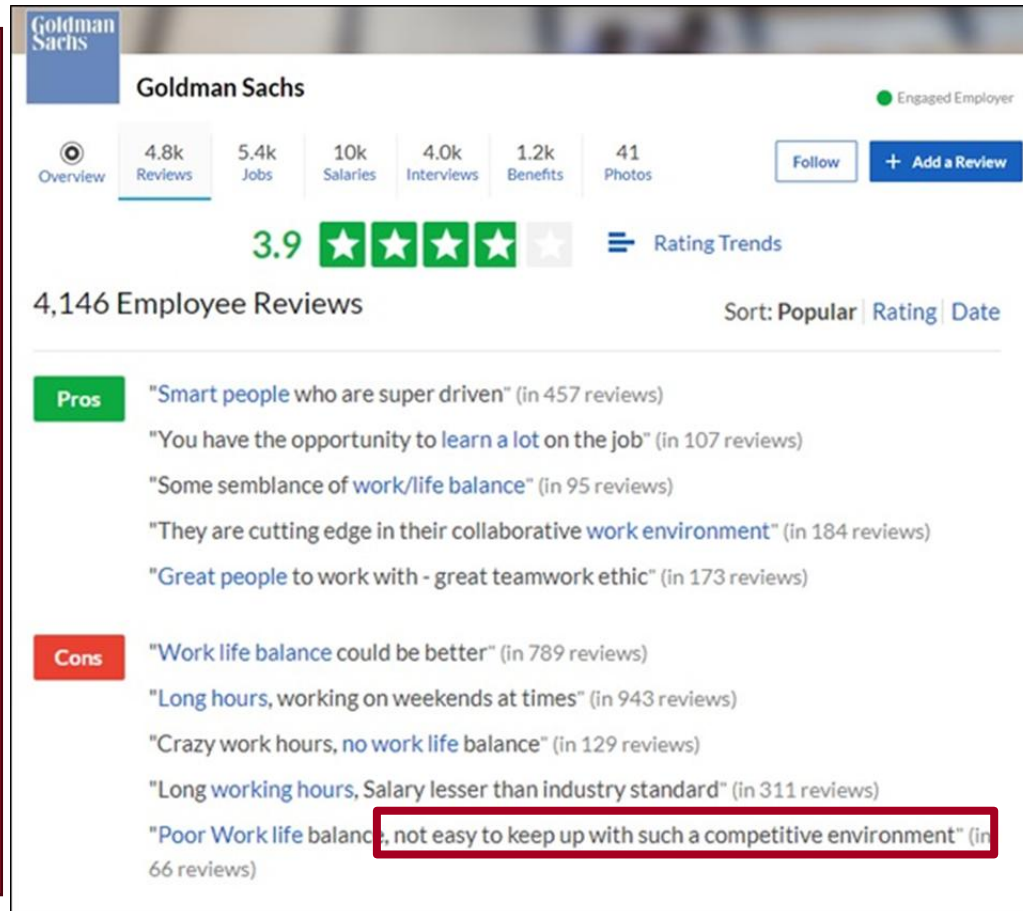
What's it like to work here? We're asked that a lot. Target respects and values the individuality of all team members and guests—and we have lots of fun in all that we do.



What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?

Faking to Fit the Organization's Culture:

Competitive Culture



Goldman Sachs

Engaged Employer

Overview 4.8k Reviews 5.4k Jobs 10k Salaries 4.0k Interviews 1.2k Benefits 41 Photos Follow + Add a Review

3.9 ★★★★★ Rating Trends

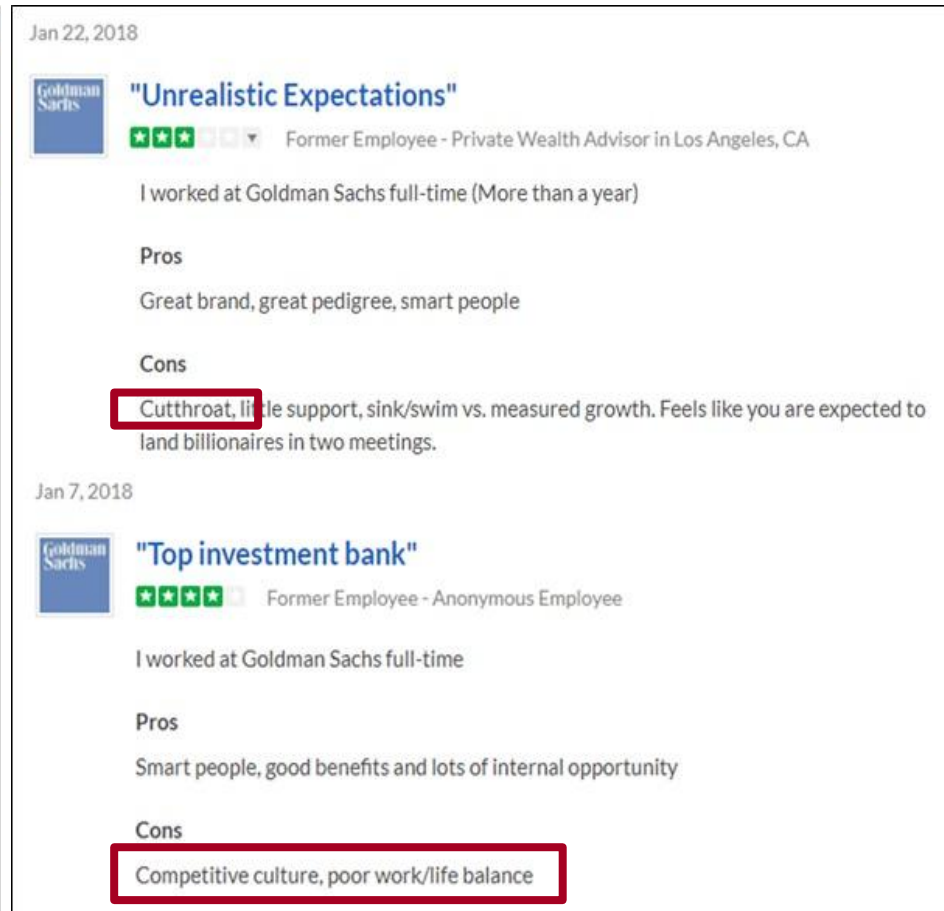
4,146 Employee Reviews Sort: Popular Rating Date

Pros

- "Smart people who are super driven" (in 457 reviews)
- "You have the opportunity to learn a lot on the job" (in 107 reviews)
- "Some semblance of work/life balance" (in 95 reviews)
- "They are cutting edge in their collaborative work environment" (in 184 reviews)
- "Great people to work with - great teamwork ethic" (in 173 reviews)

Cons

- "Work life balance could be better" (in 789 reviews)
- "Long hours, working on weekends at times" (in 943 reviews)
- "Crazy work hours, no work life balance" (in 129 reviews)
- "Long working hours, Salary lesser than industry standard" (in 311 reviews)
- "Poor Work life balance, not easy to keep up with such a competitive environment" (in 66 reviews)



Jan 22, 2018

Goldman Sachs "Unrealistic Expectations" ★★★★★ Former Employee - Private Wealth Advisor in Los Angeles, CA

I worked at Goldman Sachs full-time (More than a year)

Pros

- Great brand, great pedigree, smart people

Cons

- Cutthroat, little support, sink/swim vs. measured growth. Feels like you are expected to land billionaires in two meetings.

Jan 7, 2018

Goldman Sachs "Top investment bank" ★★★★★ Former Employee - Anonymous Employee

I worked at Goldman Sachs full-time

Pros

- Smart people, good benefits and lots of internal opportunity

Cons

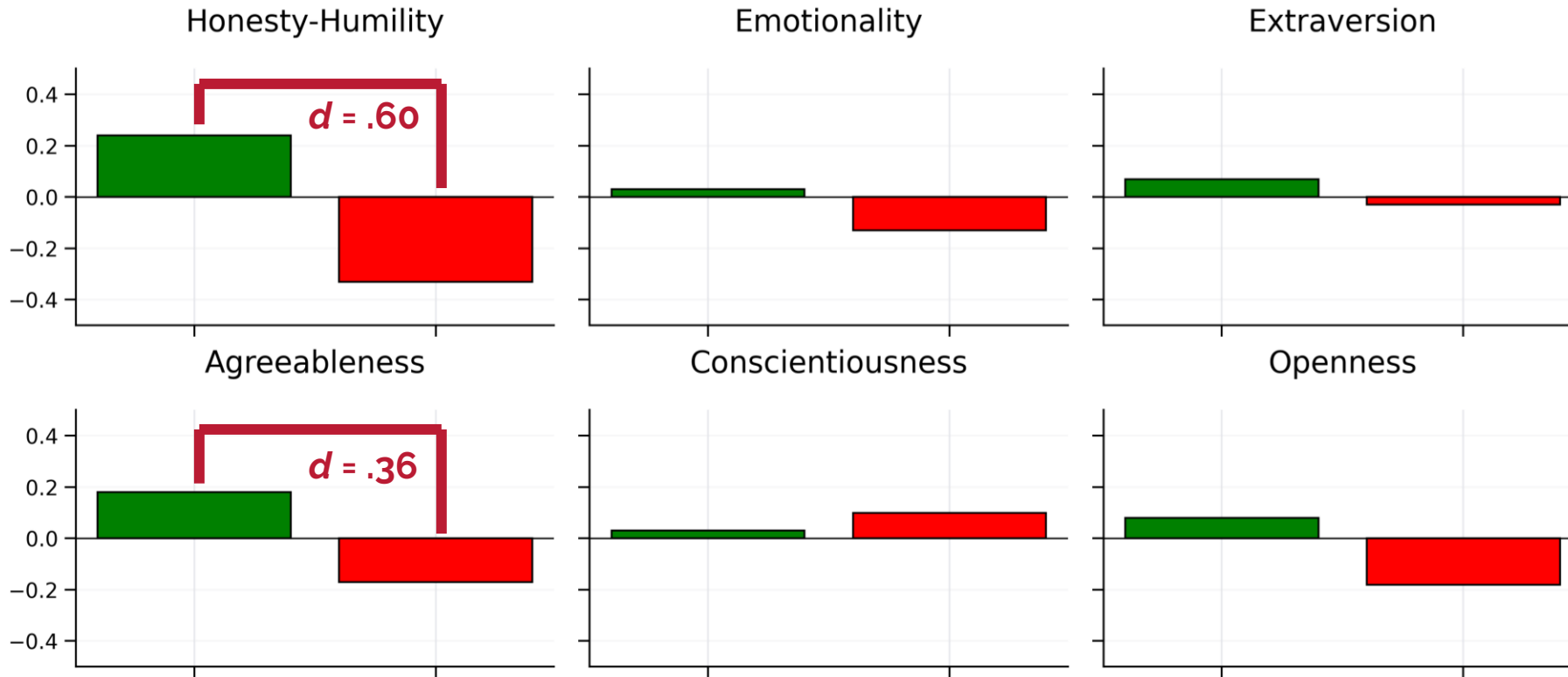
- Competitive culture, poor work/life balance

Roulin, N., & Krings, F. (2020). Faking to fit in: Applicants' response strategies to match organizational culture. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 105(2), 130–145. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000431>



What Makes (Some) Applicants Fake?

Faking to Fit the Organization's Culture:



Collaborative Culture

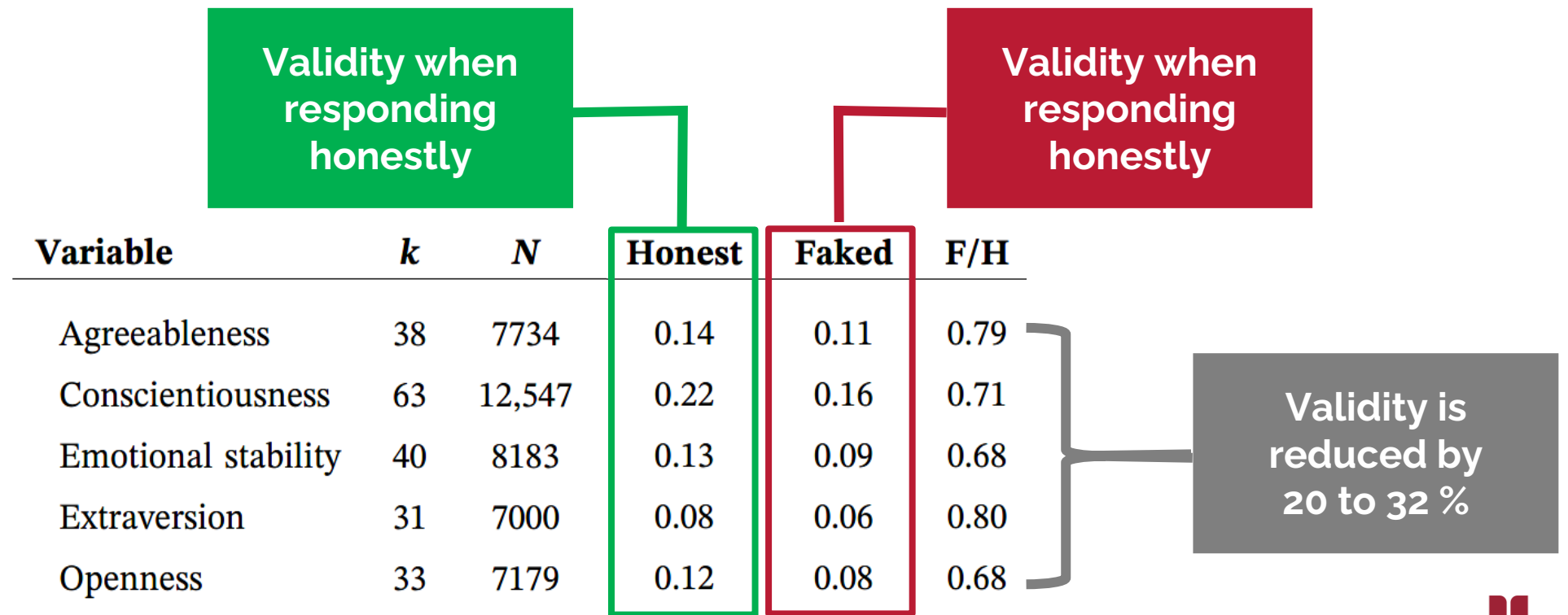
Competitive Culture

Values are regression-adjusted difference scores (selection vs. honest condition)



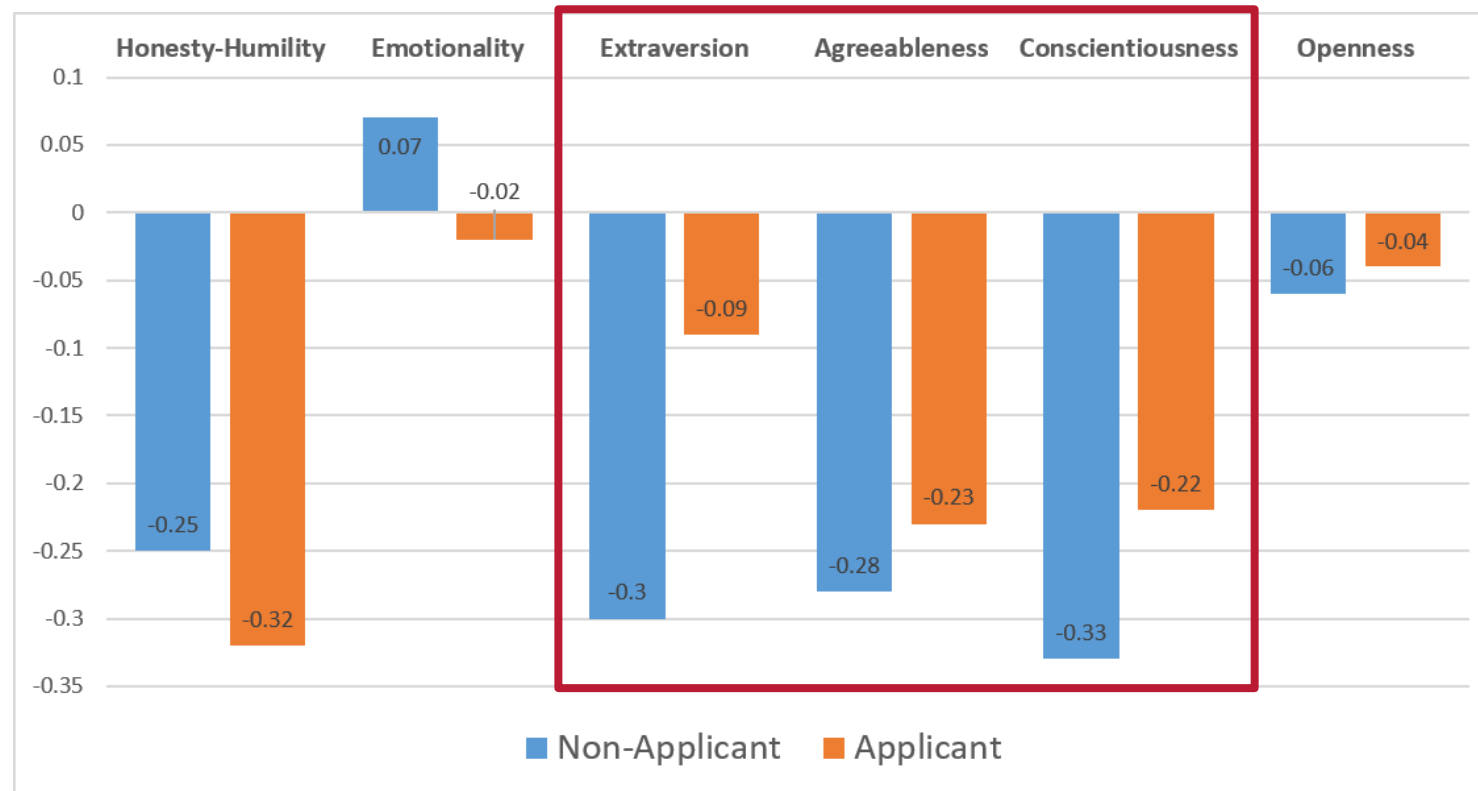
What is the Impact of Faking?

Faking on Personality Tests Reduces Criterion-related Validity (i.e., Prediction of Job Performance)



What is the Impact of Faking?

Faking on Personality Tests Can also Reduce Predictions of Counterproductive Behaviors at Work



Anglim, J., Lievens, F., Everton, L., Grant, S. L., & Marty, A. (2018). HEXACO personality predicts counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior in low-stakes and job applicant contexts. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 77, 11–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2018.09.003>



What is the Impact of Faking?

Faking in interviews is *not* automatically related to higher interview performance ratings...

... but it is associated with negative workplace outcomes:

- Manipulative behaviors towards coworkers (e.g., intimidation, $r = .37$)
- Helping others just to look good for promotions (“good actor” OCB, $r = .23$)
- Counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., stealing, sabotage, abuse, $r = .31$)
- Lower job satisfaction ($r = -.29$)
- Higher turnover intentions ($r = .39$)



What Can Organizations Do?

Options for Reducing Faking...

.... on Personality Tests

1. Detection Items
2. Warnings
3. Bogus Items
4. Forced-Choice
5. Conditional Reasoning Tests

.... In Interviews

1. Detection by Interviewers
2. Warnings
3. Structuring Interviews



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 1: Detection Items

Adding test items/sub-scales:

- Socially desirable responding (SDR) scales
- *"I am always polite", "I am never late", etc.*

Effectiveness?

- Very limited
- Confound with real desirable traits



I'm angry... you're
wasting my time!



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 2: Warnings

Type	Warning Example
Identification	Be aware that the test contains questions that are designed to identify those who attempt to fake their responses. Research has shown that these questions are an effective way of identifying individuals who provide inaccurate information about themselves.
Consequence	Dishonest or distorted self-descriptions may invalidate your results. In other words, faking might result in you not being considered.
Moral Conviction	Please consider that providing dishonest answers is immoral. Doing this violates what most people consider moral behavior
Reasoning	Please respond honestly to the following questions. Those who respond dishonestly may find themselves in jobs they are not well suited for, which may in turn result in poor performance and dissatisfaction with the job, so it is in your own best interest to answer the following questions honestly.



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 2: Warnings

Effectiveness is limited

- Small faking reduction overall ($d = 0.31$)
- Slightly better when combining all types
(Reasoning + Identification + Consequences: $d = 0.42$)
- Risk of negative applicant reactions



**I'm not mad... I'm
just disappointed...**



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 3: Bogus Items

Bogus or Overclaiming items:

- Questions embedded in biodata questionnaires
- *“How familiar are you with the concept of Language Vector Entanglement?”*

Effectiveness?

- Promising!
- But needs to be context-specific



I'm intrigued... we are finally going somewhere!



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 4: Forced-Choice

Replace single-stimulus items...

- E.g., *"I enjoy leading group projects"*

answered on a 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree* scale

... with a choice between pairs (or triads, etc.) of items matched on desirability

- *"I enjoy leading group projects"*

vs. *"I always try to be accurate in my work"*



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 4: Forced-Choice

Effectiveness?

- Reduces faking by almost half...
 - Single stimulus: $d = 0.72$
 - Forced-choice: $d = 0.42$
- ... although more complex to implement and score



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 5: Conditional Reasoning Tests

Replace overt by implicit measures :

Firing employees is an essential part of operating an organization. Generally, no employees want to be fired. As a result, sometimes when employees are aware that their organization is considering firing people, they become very worried and begin to act differently. In these desperate times, some people will find ways to make co-workers look bad in order to make them a more likely target for the upcoming firings. Many of these co-workers who get targeted do in fact get fired as a result.

What is most true about the coworkers who were fired?

- (A) They are the most obnoxious employees in company meetings **Illogical**
- (B) They are casualties of a survival-of-the-fittest environment **High Psychopathy**
- (C) They benefit from having strong memory skills in this situation **Illogical**
- (D) They are being targeted by unfair and dirty tactics **Low Psychopathy**



What Can Organizations Do?

Personality Tests – Option 5: Conditional Reasoning Tests

Effectiveness is Promising!

- Example :

Variable	M_{Honest}		$M_{\text{Selection}}$	Effect Size (d)
Honesty-Humility	3.46	<	3.69	-0.35
Emotionality	3.22	>	2.79	0.60
Extraversion	3.23	<	3.73	-0.70
Agreeableness	3.17	<	3.57	-0.62
Conscientiousness	3.85	<	4.18	-0.62
Openness	3.61	<	3.80	-0.30
CRT-WP	-12.43	=	-12.83	0.07



- Cook, R., Roulin, N., & Joy, K. (2024). Development, Validation, and Faking-Resistance of an Implicit Measure of Psychopathy in the Workplace. *Human Performance*, 37(5), 245–279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959285.2024.2422341>



What Can Organizations Do?

Interviews – Option 1: Detection by Interviewers

That is, can they accurately distinguish between:



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Faking



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Honest Self-promotion



What Can Organizations Do?

Interviews – Option 1: Detection by Interviewers

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
Participants	154 interviewers	92 interviewers	136 students	48 students
Mean Age	41.2 (8.9)	39.9 (9.1)	22.6 (2.8)	22.8 (2.8)
Mean Experience	9.6 (7.6) years	10.4 (7.0) years	-	-
Applicants	3 male students	4 male/4 female employees	4 male employees	4 male/4 female employees
Video material	2x5' mock interviews	4x5' mock interviews		1x5'mock interview
Accuracy at Detecting honest and deceptive tactics by applicants				
• Honest	13%	25%	23%	29%
• Faking	14%	12%	19%	12%
• Overall	13%	20%	23%	20%

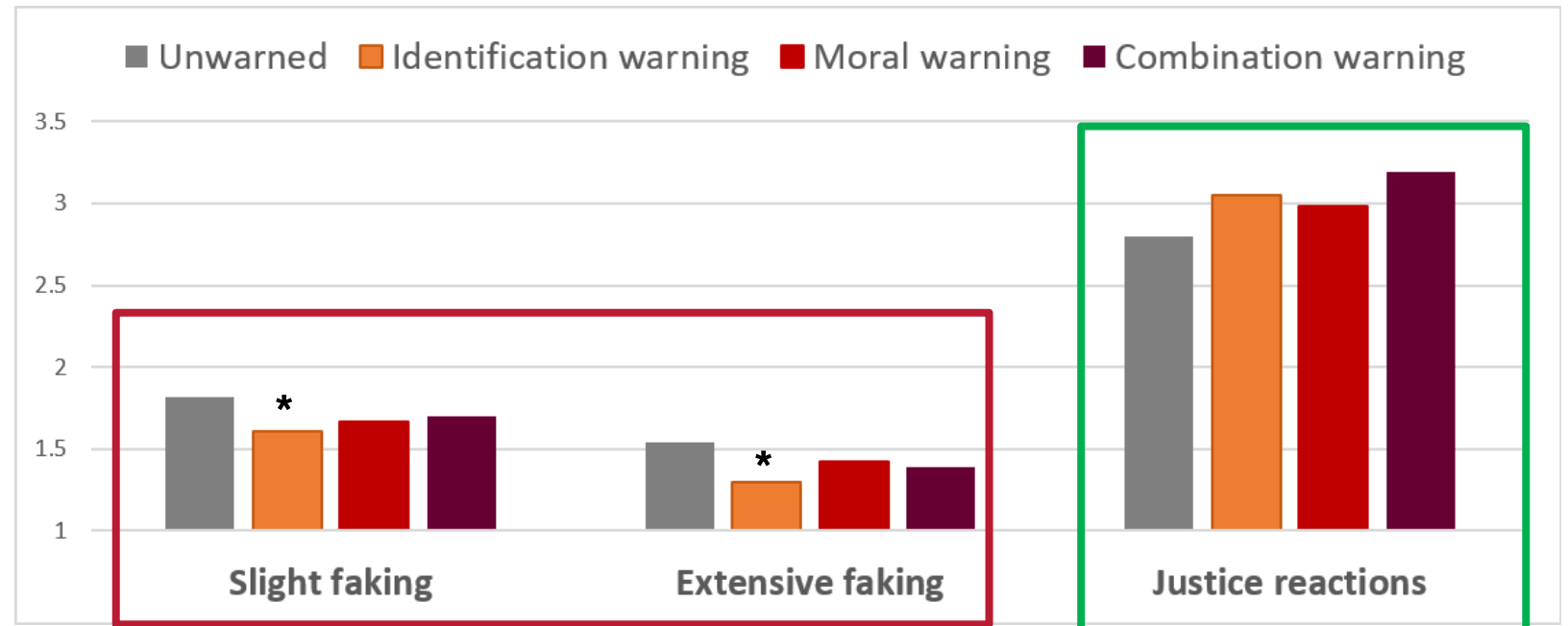
Roulin, N., Bangerter, A., & Levashina, J. (2015). Honest and deceptive impression management in the employment interview: Can it be detected and how does it impact evaluations? *Personnel Psychology*, 68(2), 395–444. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12079>



What Can Organizations Do?

Interviews – Option 2: Warnings

- Similar approach to testing
- Effectiveness?



* = Significantly different from unwarned



What Can Organizations Do?

Interviews – Option 3: Structure

Do...	Don't...
Ask job-related questions (e.g., about specific past behaviors or specific workplace situations)	Ask very broad questions (e.g., <i>what are your strengths and weaknesses ?</i>)
Limit probing or structure it	Customized or broad follow-up questions (encourage <i>more</i> faking)
Make the interview more cognitively demanding	Make the interview more informal
Use behaviorally anchored rating scales to evaluate responses to each question	Evaluate overall interview performance

- Levashina, J., & Campion, M. A. (2007). Measuring faking in the employment interview: Development and validation of an interview faking behavior scale. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 1638–1656. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.6.1638>
- Moon, B., Bourdage, J. S., & Roulin, N. (2025). Investigating Deceptive Impression Management in Behavioral Description Interviews Through a Cognitive Load Perspective. *Journal of Business and Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-025-10042-7>
- Roulin, N., Bourdage, J.S., & Powell, D.M. (2026). *Employment interviews: Past, present, and future*. In Schmitt, N. & Ryan, A.M. (Eds.) Oxford Handbook of Personnel Selection and Assessment (2nd Edition). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/9780197809013.003.0015>



What Role Can Technology Play?

Faking in Face-to-face vs. Technology-mediated Interviews:

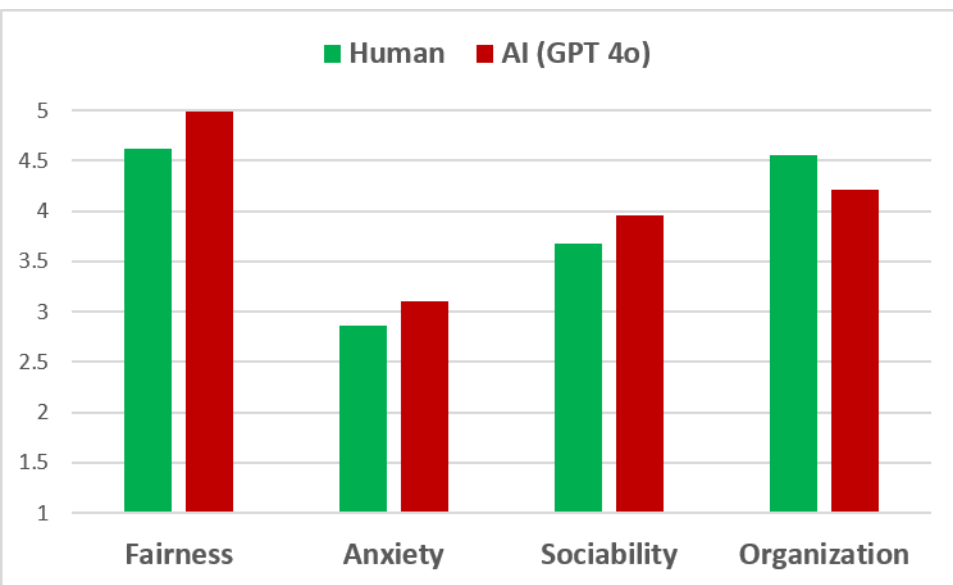
Asynchronous Video Interviews	Mean		In-person Interviews	Mean
Canagasuriam & Roulin (2021)	1.86		Roulin et al. (2014)	1.46
Roulin et al. (2023a)	2.42		Schneider et al. (2015)	1.81
Roulin et al. (2023b) - Study 1	1.71		Roulin & Krings (2016)	1.84
Roulin et al. (2023b) - Study 2	1.84		Roulin & Bourdage (2017)	2.00
Rizi & Roulin (2024)	1.68		Bourdage et al. (2018) - Study 4	2.19
Moon et al. (2024) - Study 2	1.83		Bourdage et al. (2018) - Study 5	2.17
Arseneault & Roulin (2024)	2.02		Moon et al. (2024) - Study 1	2.03
Canagasuriam & Roulin (2024)	1.76			
Overall	1.89		Overall	1.93



What Role Can Technology Play?

Generative AI as a tool to help applicants fake/cheat in...

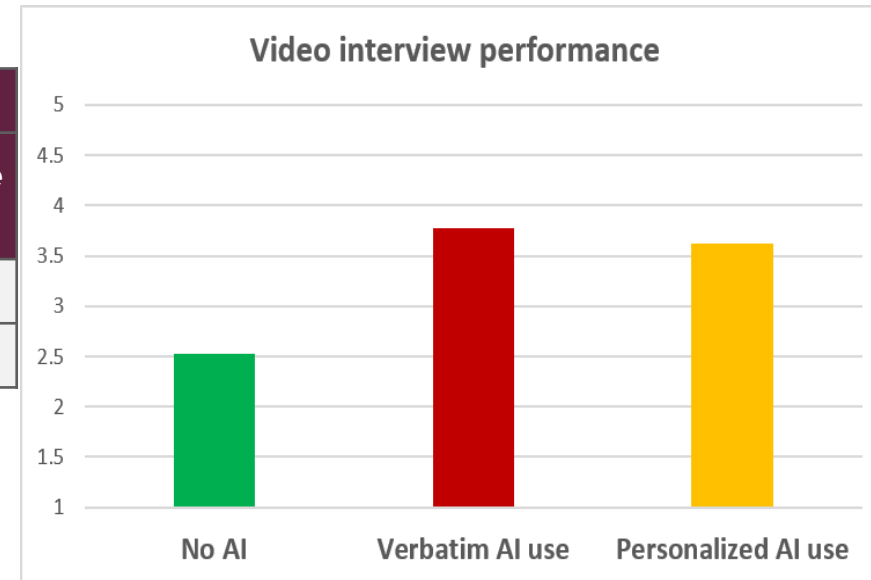
...Personality Tests



...Cognitive Tests

LLM	Percentile score	
	Verbal ability	Quantitative ability
GPT-4 (2024)	94.55	12.06
GPT o1 (2025)	99.57	95.03

...Video Interviews

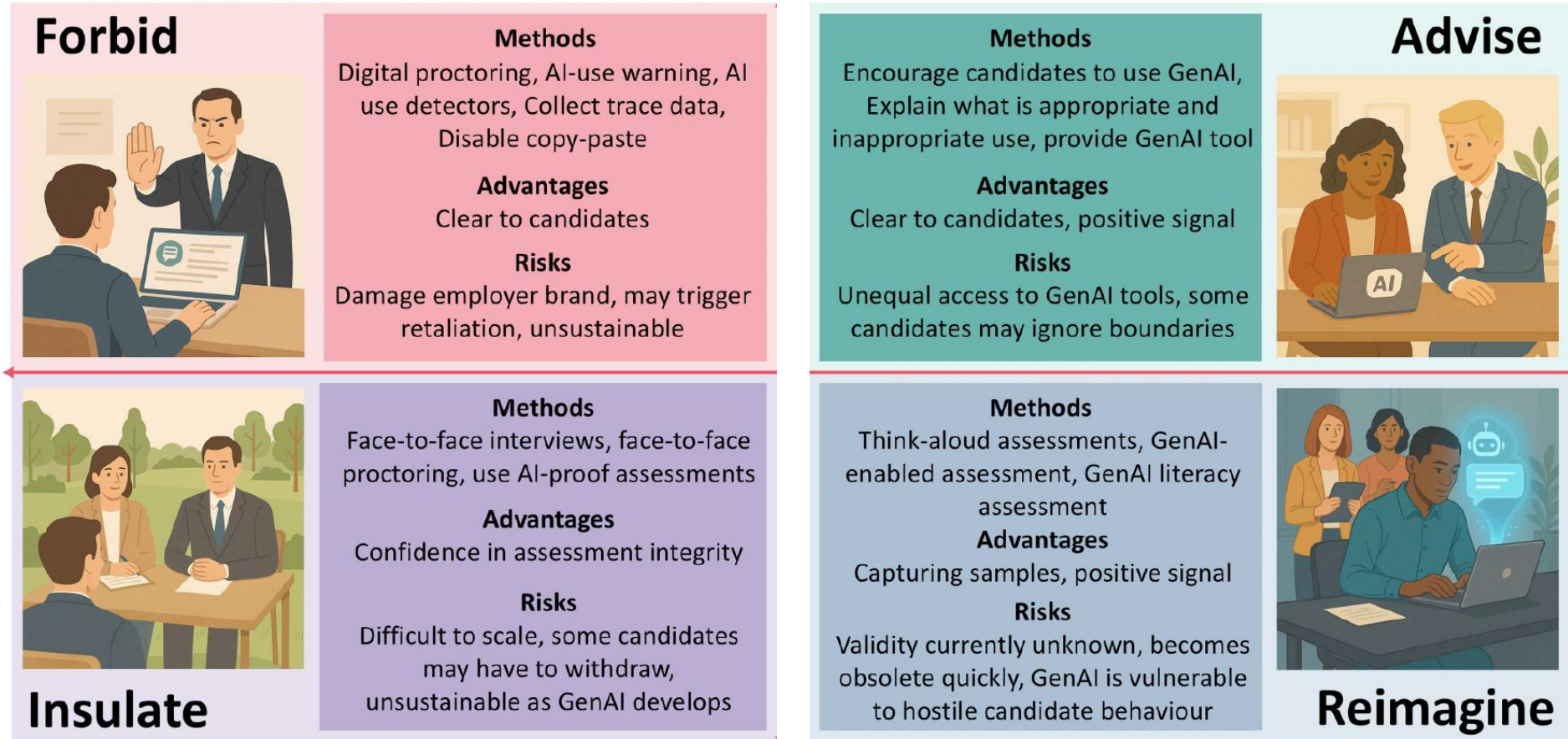


- Canagasuriam, D., & Lukacik, E.-R. (2025). ChatGPT, can you take my job interview? Examining artificial intelligence cheating in the asynchronous video interview. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 33(1), e12491. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsa.12491>
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What Role Can Technology Play?

What can organizations do about AI?



What Role Can Technology Play?

AI as an Opportunity?

Deception Detection

- Automated content analysis of interview responses (e.g., CBCA)
- Detecting response patterns in tests (e.g., webcam eye tracking)
- Create bogus items



What Role Can Technology Play?

AI as an Opportunity?

Customized Coaching

- Pre-interview training to use honest tactics (vs. faking)
- Real-time AI advice around honest test responding (vs. warning)



What Role Can Technology Play?

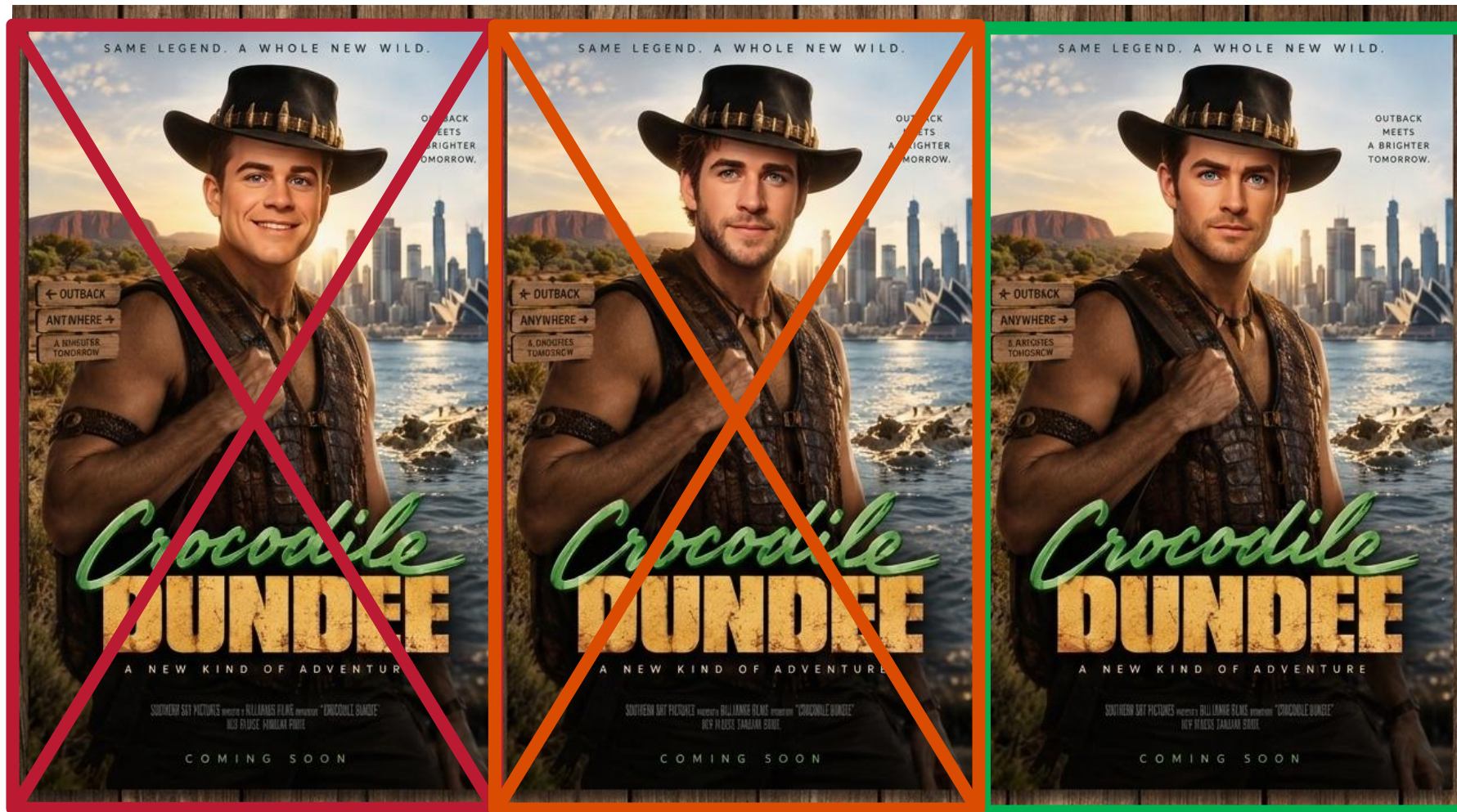
AI as an Opportunity?

New Assessments

- AI agents to develop new faking-resistant assessments...
- ...customized
- ...faster
- ...cheaper



In Conclusion





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PERSONNEL SELECTION
LAB**

Thank You!

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