



Interviewers' perceptions of impression management in employment interviews

Interviewers' perceptions of IM in interviews

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Nicolas Roulin

Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

Adrian Bangerter

Institute of Work and Organizational Psychology, University of Neuchatel, Neuchatel, Switzerland, and

Julia Levashina

College of Business Administration, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, USA

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Abstract

Purpose – Applicants often use impression management (IM) in employment interviews, and such tactics can considerably influence interviewers' evaluations of their performance. Yet, little research has examined interviewers' perceptions of such behaviors. This paper aims to examine if interviewers' perceptions of various IM behaviors converge with applicants' self-reports and the impact of interviewers' IM perceptions on interview outcomes.

Design/methodology/approach – Findings are based on data from a field study of 164 real employment interviews, conducted in recruiting agencies in Switzerland.

Findings – Interviewers' perceptions do not converge with self-reported applicant IM. Interviewers' perceptions of self-promotion and perceived applicant transparency are positively related to interview evaluations, while perceptions of slight image creation tactics are negatively related to interview evaluations. Perceptions of deceptive ingratiation, image protection, and extensive image creation were not related to evaluations.

Practical implications – It may not be that easy for interviewers to identify when applicants use IM, partly because they may be prone to overconfidence in their judgments and may (wrongly) believe they can "see through the applicant". Also, what may actually matter in interviews is not the impression applicants think they are making, but interviewers' perceptions of applicant IM.

Originality/value – This study investigates interviewers' perceptions in addition to applicants' self-reports of five types of IM in real employment interviews, and how such perceptions are related to interview outcome.

Keywords Impression management, Employment interview, Faking, Personnel selection

Paper type Research paper

Impression management (IM), or job applicants' attempts to create a particular image in interviewers' minds during employment interviews, has been studied extensively in the last decades (Stevens and Kristof, 1995; Ellis *et al.*, 2002; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002; Barrick *et al.*, 2009). The use of IM behaviors is related to interviewers' ratings (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002; Kacmar *et al.*, 1992). Nearly all job applicants engage in IM



(e.g. Ellis *et al.*, 2002; Turnley and Bolino, 2001; Levashina and Campion, 2007), but different types of interviews encourage some and discourage other types of IM behaviors (Ellis *et al.*, 2002; McFarland *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, IM can be more or less honest or deceptive (Levashina and Campion, 2007; Gilmore and Ferris, 1989). Honest tactics are used by applicants to truthfully describe their actual job-related abilities, accomplishments, and experiences. In contrast, deceptive tactics are used by applicants to embellish their actual job-related credentials or to create credentials that fit with the job requirements.

IM is a “desire to create particular impressions in others’ minds” (Leary and Kowalski, 1990, p. 35). Different types of IM tactics may be used in the employment interview (Stevens and Kristof, 1995). Applicants may use non-verbal tactics, such as smiling or frequent eye contact. They may also use verbal IM tactics. Verbal IM tactics can be assertive or defensive (Bolino *et al.*, 2008), but also honest or deceptive (Levashina and Campion, 2006; Leary and Kowalski, 1990). As such applicants may honestly describe their competencies and experiences, but also distort their responses in job-desirable ways to resemble the profile of the ideal applicant an organization is looking for. Assertive IM tactics are used to proactively construct images of being good job applicants. They include honest tactics such as ingratiation (i.e. evoking actual interpersonal attraction or liking with the interviewer) (Chen *et al.*, 2008) or self-promotion (i.e. honestly describing one’s competence or responsibility for positive results in the past) (Stevens and Kristof, 1995), but also deceptive tactics such as deceptive ingratiation (i.e. expressing insincere beliefs or values that are held by the interviewer or the organization), slight image creation (i.e. embellishing, tailoring, and fit enhancing) or extensive image creation (i.e. constructing, inventing, and borrowing experiences or accomplishments) (Levashina and Campion, 2007). Defensive IM tactics are used to reactively repair negative images of applicants and include honest tactics such as image repair (i.e. apologies, excuses, or justifications) (Tsai *et al.*, 2010), but also deceptive tactics such as image protection (i.e. omitting or masking negative experiences) (Levashina and Campion, 2007).

Applicants extensively use tactics such as self-promotion in employment interviews. In one study, 97.5 percent of job applicants used at least one self-promotion tactic during their interview (Ellis *et al.*, 2002). In another (Stevens and Kristof, 1995), applicants used an average of 37.25 of these tactics per interview. Moreover, applicants can also be deceptive in employment interviews. For instance, one study showed that 81 percent of applicants tell at least one lie in the interview (Weiss and Feldman, 2006), whereas another showed that 90 percent of undergraduate job applicants engage in different types of deceptive IM (Levashina and Campion, 2007). The majority of existing studies has been done with students (Levashina and Campion, 2007; Weiss and Feldman, 2006; Dwight and Donovan, 2003; Swider *et al.*, 2011) or with entry-level applicants who were asked to describe their recent application experience (Donovan *et al.*, 2003). Yet, research has neglected to simultaneously examine applicants’ use of honest and deceptive tactics in real employment interviews.

Because applicants use IM that can be deceptive, images applicants create in the employment interview may not accurately reflect their true job-related credentials and what employers see in the interview may differ from what they get on the job (Barrick *et al.*, 2009). Thus, applicants with low qualifications may be hired, whereas applicants with higher qualifications may be overlooked (Weiss and Feldman, 2006). This may bias hiring decisions (i.e. increasing false positives and false negatives), thereby

decreasing interview validity (Delery and Kacmar, 1998; Gilmore *et al.*, 1999; Marcus, 2006). But the extent to which interviewers' decisions may be biased by applicants' IM depends on how interviewers' perceive these behaviors and use them when evaluating applicants. Indeed, applicants' deception is an important concern of organizations (Arthur *et al.*, 2010; Stewart *et al.*, 2010) and interviewers want to know the truth about applicants' qualities (Vrij *et al.*, 2010). Yet research on this issue is still limited.

Moreover, existing research remains largely limited to applicants' self-reports of IM behaviors and how they are related to interviewers' evaluations, with inconsistent results. Some studies suggest that job applicants' honest IM behaviors may have a small (Lievens and Peeters, 2008) or negative relationship with interview evaluations (Baron, 1986; Fletcher, 1990), whereas others suggest that applicant IM is positively related to interview evaluations (Dawson *et al.*, 2006; Gilmore and Ferris, 1989; Stevens and Kristof, 1995). Similarly, some studies showed a positive relationship between deceptive IM behaviors and evaluations (Levashina and Campion, 2007), whereas others suggested a negative relationship (Swider *et al.*, 2011). These studies have suggested that these inconsistencies may be explained by differences in applicants' abilities to effectively use IM (Harris *et al.*, 2007) or initial impressions (Swider *et al.*, 2011). Alternatively, we propose that these inconsistencies may also be explained by the way interviewers perceive these IM behaviors. During the interview, interviewers receive, interpret, and evaluate information about applicants in order to assess their credentials and performance. As such, their perceptions of applicants IM, which may or may not correspond to applicants' actual behavior, could be what actually matters in interview ratings and, ultimately, hiring decisions (Hazer and Jacobson, 2003). But existing research has failed to consider the active role of interviewers. Therefore, important questions remain unanswered: Do interviewers' perceptions of job applicants' IM behaviors converge with applicants' self-reports? How do interviewers use perceived IM tactics in their ratings and evaluations? Several authors have called for more research to answer these questions (e.g. Posthuma *et al.*, 2002; Levashina and Campion, 2007; Macan, 2009), but their calls have yet received only little empirical response.

In this study, we aim to examine these questions and contribute to a better understanding of applicant IM in interviews. More precisely, we explore the use of IM tactics by job applicants in real employment interviews, interviewers' perceptions of IM use, the extent to which interviewers' perceptions of various IM behaviors converge with applicants' self-reports, and the relationship between interviewers' perceptions and interview evaluations. We begin by reviewing empirical and theoretical work on IM behaviors and by developing hypotheses that will be tested in our study.

Convergence between interviewers' perceptions and applicants' self-reports of IM

Interviewers are the targets of applicant IM. Self-reports of IM reflect applicants' intentions to convey certain images during the employment interviews, which may or may not be what interviewers actually perceive and use to evaluate applicants. If interviewers are indeed inaccurate in their perceptions of IM, this may threaten the validity of the interview. For instance, interviewers may be unable to see when applicants are being deceptive, which may explain why deceptive IM use is sometimes related to better interview evaluations (e.g. Levashina and Campion, 2007).

Theoretical models on impression management and deception suggest that accurately perceiving or detecting IM tactics may be a difficult task for interviewers. Impression management theories from social psychology (Liden and Mitchell, 1988; Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1977; Erdogan and Liden, 2006) suggest that raters (e.g. interviewers) may not be able to detect IM tactics. Moreover, deception theories, such as interpersonal deception theory (Buller and Burgoon, 1996), suggest that detecting deception is a complex task that requires cognitive resources, and is especially difficult when conducting interpersonal interactions already involving high cognitive effort (e.g. an interview). Interviewers need to identify potentially deceptive answers and judge their authenticity while preparing to ask questions, taking notes, and evaluating the quality of applicants' responses (Ralston and Kirkwood, 1999).

Existing empirical research also suggest that perceiving or detecting IM tactics may be a difficult task. To date, only one study has asked interviewers to describe their perceptions of applicants' use of IM behaviors in employment interviews (Stevens and Kristof, 1995). Based on 36 interviews, it found non-significant low to moderate convergence (measured as a correlation between self and other-reports of IM) across interviewers' perceptions of applicants' IM and applicants' self-reports of IM ($r = 0.23$ for self-promotion and $r = -0.09$ for ingratiation). In a later study, Kristof-Brown *et al.* (2002, p. 35) decided not to ask interviewers about their perceptions of applicants' IM because they were concerned that interviewers "would not be able to accurately judge IM use when it was used effectively". Moreover, while little research has investigated interviewers' perception of deceptive IM, most empirical research on deception suggests that people can convincingly fake their emotions, attitudes, and personalities (DePaulo, 1992), and perceivers are typically unable to perceive such deception (Barrick and Mount, 1996; McFarland and Ryan, 2000; Furnham, 1986; Sackett and Wanek, 1996; Toris and DePaulo, 1984). In a recent lab study, Reinhard *et al.* (2013) asked interviewers to watch one-minute statements of applicants and to classify them as truths or lies, and found that interviewers were correct only 52.4 percent of the time. Overall, theoretical models and existing empirical research would therefore suggest that interviewers' perceptions of IM are not likely to converge with applicants' self-reports in the employment interview. We will explore this issue in the present study.

Interviewers' perceptions and interview evaluations

Interviewers are likely to make inferences regarding applicants' qualities based on perceived use of honest IM tactics, such as self-promotion. They expect applicants to be able to "promote their candidacy" (Ralston and Kirkwood, 1999, pp. 202-203), and to engage in self-promotion behaviors in interviews. They may also consider such behaviors as "normal" adaptations to the situational demands of the selection context. Not using self-promotion tactics may even be perceived by interviewers as inappropriate or as an indication that applicants are not interested in a job (Bozeman and Kacmar, 1997). Because self-promotion tactics make applicants' actual abilities more apparent, interviewers may infer that applicants using them possess social skills and view them as a better fit with the job (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002; Lipovsky, 2006; Rosenfeld, 1997). Moreover, they can consider applicants' ability to present themselves well in the selection process as a good predictor of subsequent ability to do so in future interactions in the organizational setting (Griffith *et al.*, 2009). This may be especially important in jobs requiring interpersonal skills (e.g. sales jobs)

(Swider *et al.*, 2011). Recent findings even suggest that the use of self-promotion in the interview predicts actual job performance (Kleinmann and Klehe, 2010). In addition, self-promotion constitute honest attempts to attribute past success to one's own actions. Attribution theory suggests that such internal attributions tend to be positively evaluated by observers (Beauvois and Dubois, 2001; Pansu and Gilibert, 2002). Thus, interviewers may evaluate applicants more positively when they perceive them to use self-promotion and describe past job outcomes as being under their personal control than when applicants do not engage in self-promotion or when job outcomes are attributed to external and uncontrollable events (Silvester, 1997; Silvester *et al.*, 2002):

H1. Interviewers' perceptions of self-promotion will be positively related to interview evaluations.

Interviewers are also likely to make inferences regarding applicants' qualities based on perceived ingratiation tactics. Ingratiation has been identified as one of the most efficient IM tactic and is positively related to work outcomes, such as performance assessments (Higgins *et al.*, 2003). Ingratiation is used to appear more attractive to a target (Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1977). It can increase perceived similarity between the sender (e.g. an applicant) and the target (e.g. an interviewer) of the tactic and perceived likability of the sender by the target (Wayne and Liden, 1995). But, ingratiation theories (Liden and Mitchell, 1988) suggest that targets' reactions will depend on the perceived sincerity of the ingratiation attempt. An attempt that is perceived to be sincere will lead to a positive evaluation, while an attempt that is perceived to be insincere or manipulative will lead to a negative evaluation. In interviews, ingratiation use is related to perceptions of fit by interviewers (Higgins and Judge, 2004; Chen *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, interviewers may reward applicants they perceive to use honest ingratiation, because they perceived them to have values and interests that are similar to their values and interests. But, they may punish those they perceive to be manipulative in their attempt to appear a good fit with them or the organization (i.e. perceived deceptive ingratiation; Levashina and Campion, 2007). In the present study, we examine deceptive ingratiation, and we thus expect negative relationships between perceived deceptive ingratiation and interview evaluations:

H2. Interviewers' perceptions of deceptive ingratiation will be negatively related to interview evaluations.

In addition, interviewers are likely to make inferences regarding applicants' qualities when they perceive them to use slight image creation, extensive image creation, or image protection tactics. Because these tactics are deceptive in nature (Levashina and Campion, 2007), they may infer negative qualities about applicants perceived to use them. For instance, if targets perceive IM tactics to be not believable (i.e. deceptive) the sender can be seen as being egoistic, irritating, or uncooperative (Schlenker and Weigold, 1992). Similarly, interviewers might believe that applicants using image protection or image creation tactics lack integrity, are arrogant, lack job-related experiences, skills, and competencies, and are more likely to engage in deviant behaviors if hired (Griffith *et al.*, 2009; Turnley and Bolino, 2001; Griffith and McDaniel, 2006). And interpersonal deception theory (Buller and Burgoon, 1996) suggests that perceived deceit is related to negative emotions and negative evaluations

by message receivers (i.e. interviewers). As such, interviewers may punish applicants they perceive to be engaging in image protection, slight image creation, and extensive image creation tactics during the employment interview with lower interview ratings:

- H3.* Interviewers' perceptions of (a) image protection, (b) slight image creation, and (c) extensive image creation tactics will be negatively related to interview evaluations.

Another factor that may be related to interviewers' evaluations is interviewers' perceptions of applicant transparency. Perception of applicant transparency can be defined as the extent to which interviewers believe they can easily "see through the applicant" and differentiate facts from fiction in applicant answers. The term "transparency" has been rarely used or measured directly in the selection literature, except when discussing how transparent the interview is (i.e. the visibility of the dimensions to be assessed, but see Klehe *et al.*, 2008). But it is more common in interpersonal relations or lie detection research (e.g. Gilovich *et al.*, 1998; Granhag and Hartwig, 2008; Bond and DePaulo, 2008). People overestimate how transparent they are when interacting with others and (wrongly) believe that their internal state will "leak out", leading others to correctly estimate if they are telling the truth or lying (i.e. an illusion of transparency). Also, applicants may evaluate the probability of getting caught before engaging in deceptive IM (Levashina and Campion, 2006), that is, they may evaluate how transparent they may be to interviewers.

To date, research has not investigated interviewers' perceptions of applicant transparency, even if interviewers are likely to use such perceptions when evaluating applicants, because they want to know the truth about them (Vrij *et al.*, 2010). If applicants are perceived as being non-transparent, interviewers may become suspicious regarding their honesty. Moreover, interpersonal deception theory (Buller and Burgoon, 1996) suggests that the more interviewers are skeptical or suspicious about the truthfulness of applicants' behaviors, the more they will adjust their attributions of applicants' characteristics based on their behaviors, and the less positively they will evaluate their overall performance at the end of the interview. Yet, such perceptions are likely biased by overconfidence. For instance, interviewers are often over-confident regarding their ability to correctly evaluate applicants (Delery and Kacmar, 1998), predict applicants' future job performance (Dipboye, 1994), and perceive applicants' IM behaviors (Ralston and Kirkwood, 1999) or deception (Robie *et al.*, 2006). This overconfidence may lead interviewers to rely on their intuition and make poor judgments (Highhouse, 2008; Highhouse, 2002; Lodato *et al.*, 2011). Interviewers may thus give better evaluations to applicants they perceive as being more transparent, and punish those they perceive as being less transparent:

- H4.* Interviewers' perceptions of applicant transparency will be positively related to interview evaluations.

Method

We now present a field study with real selection interviews conducted in recruiting agencies, with professional interviewers interviewing experienced applicants for actual jobs.

Sample

The sample was composed of 164 applicants (98 women, mean age = 34 years, mean interviewing experience = 14 interviews) interviewing for jobs and 36 interviewers (21 women, mean age = 32 years, mean interviewing experience = 4.5 years, and mean number of interviews in career = 1260) from ten recruiting agencies in Switzerland. All applicants had secondary or university-level education and were applying for qualified jobs (e.g. sales representative, junior marketing manager). Each interviewer interviewed between 1 and 7 applicants. Each of the recruiting agencies required interviewers to follow an interview guide and to fill out the same form for each applicant.

Procedure

First, we contacted recruiting agencies by email or phone and explained the goals of our study. Times and dates where data collection would be conducted were then arranged. All agencies we contacted agreed to participate. After their interviews, both applicants and interviewers completed measures of impression management behaviors and interview evaluations. Applicants provided self-reports of tactics they used, and interviewers reported their perceptions of applicant IM. Applicants were approached and asked to participate immediately after their interview, upon leaving the room where the interview took place. This was done to limit memory decay. Interviewers and applicants were taken to different rooms and completed their questionnaires. Applicants were informed that the data collection was part of a study conducted by university researchers, assured that their answers would remain confidential, and would not be reported to interviewers or the recruiting agency. Only one applicant refused to participate. In order to minimize the influence of the study on applicants' evaluations and for recruiters to follow their typical procedure, interviewers completed the questionnaire after their own evaluation forms.

Measures

Self-promotion. Both self-reported and perceived self-promotion were measured with a five-item scale adapted from earlier research (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002; Swider *et al.*, 2011). For instance, an applicant would rate a statement like "I described my skills and abilities in an attractive way, whereas an interviewer would rate the applicant described his/her skills and abilities in an attractive way". A five-point-rating scale was used, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = to a great extent. Reliability coefficients were good ($\alpha = 0.75$ for applicants and 0.89 for interviewers, see Table I). All items were translated into French. We followed the traditional back-translation approach (Brislin, 1970), for all translations. One of the authors (fluent in both English and French) translated all items from English to French. Then we asked four bilingual doctoral students to translate the French scales back to English. The original scales and four versions of the back-translated scales were then compared and discrepancies were discussed and corrected.

Deceptive ingratiation. Both self-reported and perceived deceptive ingratiation were measured with four items taken from the Interview Faking Behavior scale (IFB; Levashina and Campion, 2007) All items taken from the IFB scale were translated into French following the procedure mentioned above. A five-point-rating scale was used, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = to a great extent. Reliability coefficients were good ($\alpha = 0.92$ for applicants and 0.93 for interviewers). Example items include I tried to

Table I.
Descriptive variables and correlations between main study variables

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
<i>Interviewers' data/perceptions</i>												
1 Gender	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
2 Age	31.65	8.21	0.19***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
3 Interviewing experience	1202.34	1552.86	0.10	0.63***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
4 Applicant transparency	3.82	0.74	-0.07	-0.03	0.06	(0.83)	—	—	—	—	—	
5 Self-promotion	3.46	0.88	0.04***	-0.05***	-0.10***	0.18**	(0.89)	—	—	—	—	
6 Deceptive ingratiation	1.84	0.69	0.21***	0.28***	0.23***	0.11	0.05	(0.93)	—	—	—	
7 Image protection	1.56	0.72	0.09	0.26***	0.17***	-0.19**	-0.29***	0.46***	(0.77)	—	—	
8 Slight image creation	1.55	0.65	0.09	0.06	0.04	-0.14*	-0.23***	0.46***	0.69***	(0.87)	—	
9 Extensive image creation	1.24	0.44	0.01	0.21***	0.09	-0.27***	-0.29***	0.41***	0.63***	0.68***	(0.89)	
10 Interview evaluation	3.40	0.85	-0.14	-0.04	-0.07	0.36	0.68***	-0.01	-0.38***	-0.38***	-0.36***	
<i>Applicants' data/self-reports</i>												
11 Gender	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	
12 Age	33.63	8.63	0.02	0.22***	0.19***	0.06	0.03	0.31***	0.14*	0.23***	0.18***	
13 Interviewing experience	14.43	13.29	0.07	0.03	-0.13	-0.16**	-0.06	-0.08	0.07	-0.06	0.08	
14 Social desirability	0.69	0.19	0.12	-0.07	-0.10	-0.02	-0.05	-0.13*	0.01	-0.02	0.06	
15 Political skills	3.95	0.49	0.00	0.14*	0.01	-0.03	0.03	0.05	0.08	0.08	0.01	
16 Self-promotion	3.72	0.69	-0.10	0.04	0.05	0.12	0.20***	0.09	0.12	0.05	-0.04	
17 Deceptive ingratiation	2.05	1.11	0.04	-0.03	-0.07	0.10	0.14*	-0.06	-0.10	-0.11	-0.06	
18 Image protection	1.45	0.76	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.01	-0.07	0.08	0.00	-0.01	0.05	
19 Slight image creation	1.24	0.51	0.02	0.11	0.06	0.08	0.03	0.15*	0.05	0.04	0.00	
20 Extensive image creation	1.09	0.31	-0.03	0.22***	0.18**	0.04	-0.02	0.14*	0.03	-0.00	-0.03	
				0.07	0.01	0.06	-0.03	0.02	-0.11	-0.13	-0.11	(continued)

Variable	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<i>Interviewers' data/perceptions</i>											
1 Gender											
2 Age											
3 Interviewing experience											
4 Applicant transparency											
5 Self-promotion											
6 Deceptive ingratiation											
7 Image protection											
8 Slight image creation											
9 Extensive image creation											
10 Interview evaluation	0.91										
<i>Applicants' data/self-reports</i>											
11 Gender	-0.06	-									
12 Age	-0.11	0.03	-								
13 Interviewing experience	-0.14*	0.01	0.27***	-							
14 Social desirability	0.01	-0.02	0.12	0.00	(0.97)						
15 Political skills	0.15*	0.05	-0.01	-0.04	0.13*						
16 Self-promotion	0.18**	-0.01	0.15*	0.04	0.23***	0.11	(0.75)				
17 Deceptive ingratiation	-0.05	0.09	-0.09	0.08	0.09	0.02	0.18**	(0.92)			
18 Image protection	0.04	0.15*	-0.13	0.23***	-0.13	0.05	0.08	0.55***	(0.78)		
19 Slight image creation	0.04	0.11	-0.18**	-0.01	-0.01	0.12	-0.06	0.35***	0.55***	(0.87)	
20 Extensive image creation	0.08	0.06	-0.01	-0.05	-0.01	0.05	-0.02	0.18***	0.38***	0.77***	(0.90)

Notes: * $p < 0.10$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$; Interviewing experience = number of interviews; Scale reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) appear on the diagonal in parentheses; Gender: 0 = women, 1 = men; $n = 164$

Table I.

adjust my answers to the interviewer's values and beliefs and the applicant tried to adjust his/her answers to my values and beliefs. All IFB items can be found in Levashina and Campion (2007).

Image protection. Image protection was also measured with four items from the IFB scale (two omitting and two masking, $\alpha = 0.78$ for applicants and 0.77 for interviewers, e.g. I did not reveal requested information that might hurt my chances of getting a job and the applicant did not reveal requested information that might hurt his/her chances of getting a job).

Slight image creation. Slight image creation was also measured with six items from the IFB scale (four embellishing, two tailoring, $\alpha = 0.87$ for applicants and 0.87 for interviewers, e.g. I exaggerated my responsibilities on my previous jobs and the applicant exaggerated his/her responsibilities on his/her previous jobs).

Extensive image creation. Extensive image creation was also measured with eight items from the IFB scale (four constructing, four inventing, $\alpha = 0.90$ for applicants and 0.89 for interviewers, e.g. I claimed that I have skills that I do not have and the applicant claimed that he/she has skills that he/she does not have).

Our IM have been used to collect applicants' self-report, but not to collect interviewers' perceptions. We thus first tested response invariance between applicants and interviewers, to see if both groups used the scales in a similar way. We performed multi-group confirmatory factor analyses with all measures and five latent variables (five IM types) in AMOS (Version 19) following the steps recommended by Davidov *et al.* (2008) to test configural (same items loading on the same constructs for both groups), metric (loadings of the same items are constrained to be equal for both groups), and scalar (intercepts of the same items are constrained to be equal for both groups) invariance. Model fit indices were moderate-to-good for the three types of invariance (CFIs = 0.88, RMSEAs = 0.06). We consider these results to be sufficient to conduct our analyses, since lack of invariance mainly limits the interpretations for mean comparisons (which we do not use), but not for correlation and regression analyses (which we use) (Davidov *et al.*, 2008).

Convergence of interviewers' perceptions with applicants' self-reports. Convergence was measured as the correlation between interviewers' perceptions of a particular IM behavior and applicants' self-reported use of that IM behavior at the interview level. This approach has been applied in past research on selection (e.g. Stevens and Kristof, 1995) and self-other agreement (e.g. Atwater *et al.*, 1998).

Interviewers' perception of applicant transparency. We created a measure of perceived applicant transparency by asking interviewers to evaluate how easy it was to judge each applicant's honesty after each interview (three-item scale, $\alpha = 0.83$). Items were it was easy for me to differentiate facts from fiction in the applicant responses, it was easy for me to judge applicant honesty, and it was easy for me to see who the applicant really was. A five-point-rating scale was used, where 1 = completely disagree, and 5 = completely agree.

Interview evaluations. Interviewers completed a seven-item scale measuring overall interview evaluation ($\alpha = 0.91$) similar to those used in previous interview research (e.g. Stevens and Kristof, 1995). Examples of items were the applicant was able to convince me that he/she had the required abilities for the position or I will recommend this applicant for the position. A five-point-rating scale, where 1 = not at all, and 5 = to a great extent, was used for all items.

Control variables. Several control variables were measured. First, social desirability was included to control for deflation of applicants' reported use of honest and deceptive IM in the interview. Applicants completed the short 13-item French version of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Valla *et al.*, 1997). An example of an item was "no matter who I'm talking to, I'm always a good listener." Respondents rated all items as being true or false. We computed Cronbach's alpha using the upper bound of the phi coefficient, a method suggested when using dichotomous items (Sun *et al.*, 2007), and obtained good reliability ($\alpha = 0.97$, see Table I). Second, political skills was included as a control variable, because applicants possessing higher communication or influence skills may be more successful in using honest IM (Harris *et al.*, 2007) or deception (Buller and Burgoon, 1996). This variable was measured by the six-item political skill inventory (PSI, Ferris *et al.*, 1999). An example of an item was "I am good at getting others to respond positively to me". All items were translated into French. Four doctoral students performed back-translation on all items. A seven-point rating scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree* was used. Reliability was sufficient ($\alpha = 0.70$, see Table I). Applicants' experience with interviews (i.e. number of interviews in career) was included as a control variable because interview experience may influence behavior during the interview (Barrick *et al.*, 2010). Applicants' gender and age were also included as control variables. Finally, interviewers' level of interviewing experience (i.e. number of interviews conducted in their career), gender and age were also measured.

Results

IM use, interviewers' perceptions, and convergence

Descriptive statistics and correlations between main variables at the interview level are presented in Table I. All applicants engaged in self-promotion, 70 percent in ingratiation, 40 percent in image protection, 44 percent in slight image creation, and 21 percent in extensive image creation. Furthermore, applicants engaged mainly in self-promotion ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.69$) and, to a lesser extent, in deceptive ingratiation ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 1.11$), but engaged less in image protection or image creation. In addition, applicants' reported use of self-promotion was significantly related to social desirability scores ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.01$), but reported use of the four other IM were not (see Table I). These results suggest that applicants with a stronger tendency to present themselves according to expectations were also prone to reporting more self-promotion. But, applicants with higher self-reported political skills did not report using more IM (r s between 0.02 and 0.12, *ns.*). Applicants' reports of self-promotion use were unrelated to reports of slight or extensive image creation (r s between -0.06 and -0.02 , *ns.*). In all interviewer-applicant pairs except for one, interviewers perceived applicants to engage in self-promotion. In 63 percent of the pairs, interviewers perceived that applicants engaged in deceptive ingratiation, in 57 percent in image protection, in 68 percent in slight image creation, and in 43 percent in extensive image creation.

We examine convergence using interview-level correlations between interviewers' perceptions of IM use and applicants' self-reported IM use for the five types of tactics (see numbers in italics in Table I). Correlations were small, ranging from -0.11 to 0.14 , and none of them approached standard levels of significance. These results suggest low convergence between interviewers' perceptions and applicants' self-reports of IM at the interview level.

Interviewers' perceptions and interview evaluations

Our hypotheses stated that interviewers' perceptions of self-promotion and perceived applicant transparency would be positively related to interview evaluation, whereas perceptions of deceptive ingratiation, image protection, slight image creation, and extensive image creation would be negatively related to interview evaluation. Because of the clustered structure of our data (i.e. some interviewers conducted interviews with several applicants), we could not treat all interviews as being independent from each other, and we could not use simple linear regressions. We thus tested these hypotheses using multilevel linear regression analyses. Such analyses allowed capturing the effect of interviewers' perceptions of each applicant's IM and transparency on interview evaluation at Level 1, while controlling for interviewer-level characteristics or potential response tendencies at Level 2 (Table II). Moreover, our goal was to examine the effect of interviewers' perceptions of IM behaviors over and above factors that have been previously shown to influence interview evaluation: applicants' and interviewers' individual characteristics (i.e. age, gender, and interviewing experience), applicants' social desirability and political skills, and applicants' reports of IM. Thus, in Model 1 we entered traditional control variables (i.e. age, gender, and experience), but also applicants' level of social desirability (because we are interested in the relationship between IM tactics and interview evaluation over and above socially desirable responding), and political skills (because they may help applicants to be more efficient in their use of IM tactics). In Model 2, we added applicants' self-reported use of our five IM tactics. In Model 3, we added interviewers' perceived applicant transparency and interviewers' perceptions of the five IM tactics. The fixed effects for each model and fit indices (-2 log likelihood) are displayed. Intraclass correlations (ICC; variance explained at the interviewer level, computed on the null model) showed that only a small portion of the variance (3.5 percent) was explained at the interviewer level.

Model 1 suggests that applicants' level of social desirability and their political skills are not related to interview evaluation. Model 2 suggests that self-promotion was the only reported IM behavior related to interview evaluation ($B = 0.19$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$), but all other types of reported IM were not. Applicants using more self-promotion were better evaluated by interviewers. Model 3 indicates that interviewers' perceptions of applicant transparency were positively related to interview evaluation ($B = 0.21$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.01$). Thus, the more interviewers believed they were able to easily see who the applicants really were, the better the interview evaluations were. Moreover, perceived self-promotion was positively related to interview evaluation ($B = 0.54$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < 0.01$) but perceived slight image creation was negatively related to interview evaluation ($B = -0.21$, $SE = 0.08$, $p < 0.05$). Perceived deceptive ingratiation, image protection, and extensive image creation were not related to interview evaluation. Also, applicants' self-reported self-promotion did not remain a significant predictor. Together, these results support $H1$, $H3b$, and $H4$ but not $H2$, $H3a$, and $H3c$.

Discussion

This field study simultaneously investigated interviewers' perceptions and applicants' self-reports of self-promotion, deceptive ingratiation, image protection, and slight and extensive image creation tactics in real employment interviews. Next, we discuss how our results extend previous research on IM in the employment interview. We first

Predictor	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	B	SE	t	B	SE	t	B	SE	t
Intercept	0.01	0.08	0.10	0.01	0.07	0.15	0.02	0.06	0.32
<i>Controls</i>									
Applicant gender	0.00	0.08	0.04	-0.01	0.08	-0.13	-0.02	0.06	-0.27
Applicant age	-0.10	0.08	-1.23	-0.12	0.08	-1.51	-0.04	0.06	-0.80
Applicant interviewing experience	-0.10	0.08	-1.27	-0.10	0.08	-1.21	-0.07	0.05	-1.30
Interviewer gender	-0.13	0.09	-1.60	-0.11	0.09	-1.23	-0.12	0.06	-1.90
Interviewer age	0.02	0.10	0.23	0.03	0.11	0.27	0.05	0.08	0.65
Interviewer interviewing experience	-0.10	0.10	-1.02	-0.09	0.10	-0.85	-0.07	0.07	-0.89
Applicant social desirability	0.00	0.08	0.04	-0.04	0.08	-0.53	-0.01	0.06	-0.27
Applicant political skills	0.11	0.08	1.44	0.10	0.08	1.30	0.00	0.05	-0.05
<i>Applicant self – reported</i>									
Self-promotion				0.19*	0.08	2.37	0.05	0.05	0.85
Deceptive ingratiation				0.00	0.09	0.05	0.11	0.06	1.70
Image protection				-0.00	0.11	-0.01	-0.07	0.07	-0.97
Slight image creation				-0.05	0.14	-0.36	-0.00	0.09	0.00
Extensive image creation				0.09	0.12	0.78	0.03	0.08	0.38
<i>Interviewer perceptions of</i>									
Applicant transparency							0.21**	0.06	3.81
Self-promotion							0.54**	0.06	9.55
Deceptive ingratiation							0.08	0.06	1.14
Image protection							-0.08	0.08	-0.98
Slight image creation							-0.21*	0.08	-2.49
Extensive image creation							0.01	0.08	0.20
-2Loglikelihood			433.34			426.71			297.89
df			11			16			22
$\Delta-2LL$			-5.77			-6.63			-128.22**

Notes: $n = 36$ at the interviewer level and $n = 164$ at the interview/applicants level; Values are unstandardized regression estimates (only fixed effects are presented); Gender: 0 = Women, 1 = Men; Intraclass correlation (computed on the null model) = 0.035; * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

Table II.
Multilevel linear regression predicting interview evaluation

discuss our main findings, then we describe implications for theory and practice, and suggest ways to continue to explore this line of research.

Main findings

First, our study highlights two new factors potentially influencing applicants' use of deceptive IM. In this study, although the percentage of applicants engaging in self-promotion is similar to previous research findings (e.g. Ellis *et al.*, 2002; Stevens and Kristof, 1995), the base rate of deceptive ingratiation, image protection, and slight and extensive image creation is lower compared to the previously reported results (e.g. Levashina and Campion, 2007; Donovan *et al.*, 2003). For instance, only 21 percent of applicants reported engaging in extensive image creation, whereas this proportion was between 65 percent and 92 percent in Levashina and Campion (2007). These differences suggest two potential factors influencing applicants' use of deceptive IM that were absent from previous models of IM or faking (e.g. Levashina and Campion, 2006): On the one hand, differences may be due to the type of applicants (experienced applicants vs students or recent graduates). For instance, experienced applicants have actual job experience on which they can build their responses, while students or recent graduates may need to use more image creation tactics to compensate for their lack of experience. To date, the majority of empirical studies on interviews have been conducted in laboratory settings with hypothetical jobs and undergraduate students assuming the role of interviewers or applicants (Posthuma *et al.*, 2002). This study is based on real interviews conducted by experienced interviewers with a relatively large sample of experienced applicants that enhances the ecological validity of our study. On the other hand, these differences can also be due to cultural factors (Swiss vs US sample). For instance, modesty is more valued in Switzerland, while self-promoting behaviors are more valued in North America (Schmid Mast *et al.*, 2011). Further research (cross-cultural studies) might comprehensively investigate potential cultural differences in IM use and perceptions.

Second, this study is the first to evaluate interviewers' perceptions of five types of IM, and to compare interviewers' perceptions with applicants self-reports. This is a first step into examining interviewers' ability to perceive or detect IM tactics, as called for by several researchers (e.g. Levashina and Campion, 2007; Macan, 2009). When comparing interviewers' perceptions of applicant IM with applicants' self-reports of IM using correlations, we found low convergence. These results are in line with the low correlations observed by Stevens and Kristof (1995) for honest IM. Therefore, and contrary to previous suggestions (Van Iddekinge *et al.*, 2005; Williams *et al.*, 2006), it may not be easy for interviewers to correctly detect applicants' IM while conducting interpersonal interactions already involving high cognitive effort (e.g. an interview, Buller and Burgoon, 1996).

Finally, our study shows that what actually matters for interviewers when evaluating applicant are their own perceptions of applicants' IM tactics and not applicants' actual use of IM. Our results suggest that interview evaluations were related to interviewers' perceptions of applicant IM. As expected, self-promotion was valued by interviewers, and thus related to better interview ratings. Interviewers' perceptions of slight image creation usage were negatively related to interview ratings. In addition, applicants perceived as being more transparent received higher evaluations by interviewers. Interestingly, perceived applicant transparency was not related to applicants' use of IM tactics, suggesting that those perceived as being more

transparent did not actually engage in more or less IM. Applicants' self-reported use of self-promotion was also positively related to interview evaluations, but this effect disappeared when interviewers' perceptions were included in the analysis. Also applicants' self-reported deceptive ingratiation, image protection, and image creation were not related to interview evaluations. As such, what actually matters is interviewers' perceptions of applicants' IM tactics. Another interpretation is that asking interviewers to evaluate applicant IM may decrease the actual relationship between applicants' self-reported IM and interview evaluations. Rating applicant IM may make interviewers aware of IM tactics and better reflect on them, reducing the direct weight of IM use in their decisions. This may explain why, contrary to past research (e.g. Levashina and Campion, 2007), actual use of image protection or slight image and extensive image creation was not related to evaluations in one direction or another. Future research should explore whether asking interviewers to rate applicant IM results in better (i.e. less biased by IM) or worse decisions, and what effect this may have on the validity of interview evaluations.

Implications

Implications for theory. Our results suggest that applicants do not benefit nor get punished for actually engaging in IM. What actually matters is not the impression applicants want to make, but interviewers' perceptions of applicants' IM tactics. Such results may explain the inconsistent relationships between self-reported or coded IM and interview evaluations observed in past research and represent a first step in better understanding IM effectiveness. They also suggest rethinking existing theoretical models of IM in interviews (e.g. Levashina and Campion, 2006; Marcus, 2009) and developing new ones that include interviewers' perceptions.

Implications for practice. These results have implications for organizations and interviewers. The purpose of IM tactics is to influence interviewers' evaluations. More specifically, past research has suggested that applicants can use deceptive IM to appear as a good fit for the job and/or the organization, even if they actually do not possess the required skills, competencies, or practical experience (Weiss and Feldman, 2006; Levashina and Campion, 2006). Organizations run the risk of hiring these applicants instead of more qualified ones. It is therefore clearly in their interest to minimize this risk by identifying applicants who use deceptive IM during the interview and eliminating them from the pool of applicants. Yet, interviewers may be prone to overconfidence in their judgments and may thus (wrongly) believe they easily can "see through the applicant". Our findings suggest that it is not easy to identify when applicants use IM. Our findings thus shed some light on improvement opportunities for interviewers. Howard and Ferris (1996) showed that training can help interviewers identify IM tactics. Therefore organizations may develop training interventions to help interviewers' identifying IM tactics. One solution could be to enhance interviewers' knowledge about the different types of IM tactics applicants may use. Another could be to train interviewers to detect and discount IM (e.g. image creation) based on accumulated evidence from research on lie detection (e.g. Vrij *et al.*, 2010). Also, as mentioned above, asking interviewers to reflect on applicants' IM prior to filling out evaluation sheets may potentially reduce the impact of IM on interview evaluations.

Implications for future research. Our results highlight several areas for future research on IM. For instance, future research should investigate how individual

differences of interviewers and applicants influence their perceptions. Do different-gender dyads (i.e. a female interviewer interviewing a male applicant or a male interviewer interviewing a female applicant) have lower convergence in their perceptions than same-gender dyads? Research on differential demography has found effects of gender differences on perceived effectiveness in superior-subordinate dyads (Tsui and O'Reilly, 1989) and on organizational attachment (Tsui *et al.*, 1992). Convergence may be higher when male interviewers perceive male applicant IM or when women perceive female applicant IM. Also, do dyads where applicant and interviewer have different cultural backgrounds converge less in their perceptions? People from different cultures may differ in how they perceive and use IM (Schermerhorn and Bond, 1991; Zaidman and Drory, 2001; Middleton and Jones, 2000) or deception (Lewis and George, 2008). For instance, North American cultures value more self-oriented or proactive behaviors such as self-promotion, whereas European cultures value more modest behaviors (Chhokar *et al.*, 2007; Schmid Mast *et al.*, 2011). North American interviewers may erroneously interpret European applicants' modest behaviors as an indication of deception (e.g. hiding things from them), whereas European interviewers may erroneously interpret North American applicants' self-promotion behaviors as being "too good to be true". Also, do dyads with larger age differences between the interviewer and the applicant (i.e. a young interviewer interviewing an older applicant or an older interviewer interviewing a young applicant) converge less in their perceptions? Future research is required to investigate these issues.

Furthermore, applicants' and interviewers' perceptions in our study were based on the entire interview. Such a procedure is similar to those used in past research (e.g. Levashina and Campion, 2007; Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002), and thus correspond to overall perceptions. However, this design does not allow measuring the convergence of interviewers' perceptions of IM at specific times during the interview. For instance, an applicant may report that he/she engaged in a specific image protection tactic (e.g. voluntarily not mentioning problems in past jobs) to a considerable extent during the interview. Interviewers may also perceive that this applicant engaged in that tactic to a considerable extent, leading to apparent high convergence. But the applicant may be referring to one specific section of the interview (e.g. after ten minutes, when the interviewer asked about conflicts in past jobs), whereas the interviewer may refer to another (e.g. after 30 minutes, when the applicant talked about delays on a project). Thus, convergence in perceptions may be overestimated by global analyses. Experimental studies should be conducted to obtain more precise measures of the convergence of IM perception in real time and thus address this limitation.

Limitations

This study has limitations. Applicants completed our measures during the selection process for an actual job. Therefore, the low levels of self-reported use of slight or extensive image creation tactics may be due to applicants' high motivation to be hired. Also, because interviewers provided data about their perceptions of IM and interview evaluation, the results of regression analyses may not be free from problems associated with common method variance, an issue typical of employment interview research (Posthuma *et al.*, 2002). Unfortunately, we were not able to obtain additional outcome variables from recruiting agencies (e.g. which applicants were actually recommended

or hired for the job), nor were we allowed to videotape interviews to obtain external evaluations of applicants. Yet, we believe our data mirrors what happens in actual interviews, where interviewers collect information and form perceptions of applicants (e.g. about their qualities or their level of honesty) during the interaction, and then assess applicants at the end of the interview based on collected information and formed perceptions (Barrick *et al.*, 2009; Dipboye *et al.*, 1984). Future research may use longitudinal studies and collect data on IM use/perception after the interview, on interview evaluations when the final hiring decision is made, and on applicant performance on the job later on. Moreover, interviewers completed our measures after their own evaluation sheets to comply with their interviewing procedure, which could have influenced the way they reported their perceptions of IM use. Also, our results are based on a small sample of interviewers interviewing several applicants in ten recruiting agencies in Switzerland. This study should be replicated with a larger sample of interviewers. Results should also be replicated in other countries. The interview format could also have affected the results of the study. Even if interviewers followed an interview guide, they did not have a specific list of questions to ask applicants. Our findings may be affected by the level of interview structure, the type of question used, or the way the interview was conducted. Thus, further research should investigate interviewers' perceptions with situational (Latham and Saari, 1984; Maurer, 1997; Latham and Sue-Chan, 1999) or past behavior interviews (Janz, 1982; Motowidlo *et al.*, 1992).

Conclusion

In a recent meta-analysis, Barrick *et al.* (2009, p. 1349) explained that "what they [employers] see in the interview may not be what they get on the job". Our research supports this conclusion by showing that interviewers and applicants do not see IM behaviors in the same way. It may be in organizations' best interest to develop specific training programs or to implement interview formats (e.g. more structured interviews or past-behavioral questions, see Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2002; Bolino *et al.*, 2008; Ellis *et al.*, 2002; Levashina and Campion, 2007) that help interviewers see things more clearly.

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About the authors

Nicolas Roulin is a Post-doctoral Researcher and Lecturer of Organizational Behavior at the University of Lausanne, Switzerland. His research interests include interactions between recruiters and applicants in the employment interview; applicants' strategies and behavior on the job market; and the academic-practitioner gap surrounding personnel selection methods. His research has been published in journals including the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, and the *Journal of Personnel Psychology*. Nicolas Roulin is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: nicolas.roulin@unil.ch

Adrian Bangerter is a Professor of Work Psychology at the University of Neuchâtel, Switzerland. His research interests include coordination processes in conversation, gesture, and language, interactions between recruiters and applicants in personnel selection, and cultural transmission of knowledge and popular beliefs. His research has been published in many journals including the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Psychological Science*, *Cognitive Science*, the *British Journal of Social Psychology*, and the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. He is currently the editor-in-chief of the *Swiss Journal of Psychology*.

Julia Levashina is an Assistant Professor of Management at Kent State University, Ohio. Her research interests include employment interviews, impression management and faking. Her research has been published in journals including *Personnel Psychology*, the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, and *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*.