

FEEDBACK REPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS

Organizational culture and behaviors in selection

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Research Project conducted by:

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INTRODUCTION & GOALS OF THE PROJECT

Applicant impression management or faking behaviors have been studied and discussed extensively in the literature on personnel selection, including interviews (Gilmore et al. Ferris, 1999; Levashina & Campion, 2007; Stevens & Kristof, 1995) or personality tests (Galić et al., 2012; Griffith et al., 2007). These studies have shown that many applicants use faking tactics to increase their chances of getting hired. Several theoretical models have been proposed to explain the conditions and processes that lead people to use faking (e.g., Ellingson & McFarland, 2011; Levashina & Campion, 2006; Tett & Simonet, 2011). Identifying the antecedents of faking and, ultimately, the fakers, is an important concern for organizations (Stewart et al., 2010). Indeed, faking has many detrimental consequences for the selection process. It is a potential threat to the validity of selection instruments (Delery & Kacmar, 1998; Gilmore et al., 1999; Marcus, 2006; Rosse et al., 1998). For instance, it can affect the ranking of applicants (Stewart et al., 2010; Weiss & Feldman, 2006) or the relationship between test scores and performance on the job (Peterson et al., 2011).

Despite the existence of numerous theoretical models on faking behaviors, little attention has been given to the role of competition. Recently, theoretical models of applicants' behaviors in the selection process derived from signaling theory have introduced competition as a potential antecedent of applicants' faking (Bangerter et al., 2012; Roulin et al., 2016). These models suggest that applicant faking is a form of adaptive behavior to the competitive nature of the selection process as well as a reaction to other applicants' perceived behavior. In a recent series of studies (Roulin & Krings, 2016), we showed that applicant faking was predicted by Competitive Worldviews (CWs), that is, applicants' tendency to perceive the world as a "competitive jungle characterized by a ruthless, amoral struggle for resources and power in which might is right and winning everything" (Duckitt et al., 2002, p. 92).

In the present research, we wanted to examine the impact of another form of competition described as a potential antecedent of faking in the Roulin et al. (2016): Organizational competitive culture.

This research included a series of independent studies examining how job applicants adapt their faking behaviors on personality inventories to the particular culture of the hiring organization, to increase person-organization (P-O) fit. We focused on the level of competitiveness as one central element of organizational culture. In short, we found that applicants facing a competitive culture decrease their scores on traits like honesty-humility and agreeableness whereas applicants facing a less competitive culture do the opposite, i.e., they increase their scores on these traits. Moreover, we discovered that applicants first identify the ideal personality profile based on elements of the organizational culture, and then adapt their responses accordingly.

PARTICIPANTS, DATA COLLECTION, & ANALYSES

A total of about 1,000 U.S. participants were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online survey platform to participate in one of the five studies conducted. The characteristics of the sample were similar across studies:

- About 45% female.
- Around 35 years of age on average.
- About 75% of participants identified as Caucasian, with 10% Black/African American, 5% Asian, 5% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Other/Mixed.
- About 60% of the sample had post-secondary education.
- About 80% of the participants were employed.

Participants were presented with scenarios that varied in terms of the culture of the hiring organization. For instance, in some of the studies participants read one of the two descriptions of the company:

Competitive organizational culture: “It’s a cool and dynamic place. At Western Inc., it’s all about winning. We often say: Winning is not the first thing, it’s the only thing! People here realize that it’s kind of a dog-eat-dog world where you have to be ruthless at times. So if you have the power, you are encouraged to use it to reach your goals, even it means acting cold-bloodedly. Also, in Western Inc., it is totally okay to strive for high financial rewards and big deals because after all, they all know that money and wealth are what really counts in life.”

Less competitive organizational culture: “It’s a cool and dynamic place. At Western Inc., it’s not all about winning. In fact, we often say, winning is not always the first thing. In here, it is much more important to have integrity in your dealings with others than to have power or money. So what counts most in this company is integrity and honesty, it is regarded as the best policy in all cases. Also, managers treat us not as inferiors but as fellow workers, and treat us with lots of kindness and consideration. So all in all, in Western Inc., it is much about cooperation, helping and sharing, and not about competition and acquisitiveness.”

In one study, these simple scenarios were replaced by information taken from real U.S.-based companies identified as being highly vs. less competitive.

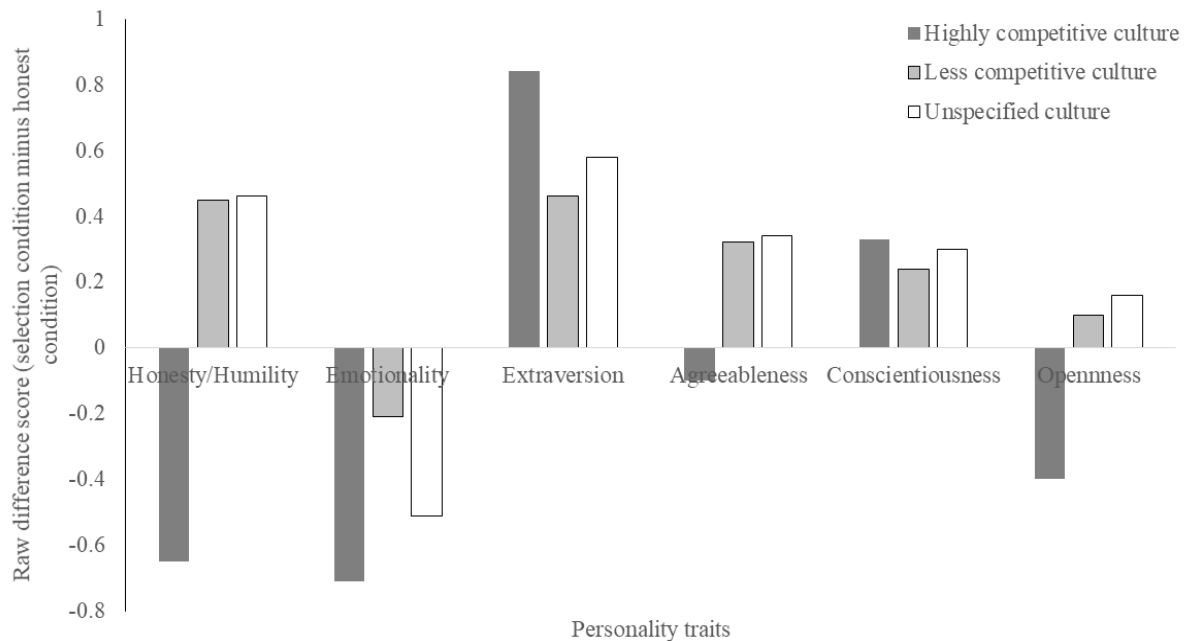
In all the studies, participants completed an online personality questionnaire called the HEXACO, which assesses 6 traits: Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness (see www.hexaco.org for more information). Participants completed the questionnaire both in a selection scenario and in a control (i.e., non-selection) scenario. We looked at differences of response patterns between the two conditions to examine if (and how) people faked in the selection scenario.

MAIN FINDINGS

Across the various studies, we found a similar pattern of response or faking strategies. Participants who faced a selection scenario at an organization with a competitive culture faked to resemble more closely the personality profile of a competitive person, by reducing their scores on Honesty-Humility, Agreeableness, Emotionality, and Openness. In contrast, participants who faced a selection scenario at an organization with a less competitive culture showed the opposite behavior, and increased their scores on most of these traits. Participants in a control condition (i.e., with no indication about the organization’s culture) provided responses somewhere in between.

We found a similar pattern of responses, albeit with more attenuated faking levels, in studies where participants could choose among real U.S. companies (and received true information about these companies based on their website or reviews from glassdoor.com) or reported their behaviors in their last job application.

The pattern of results can be illustrated with the following graph (based on the findings from one of the studies):



If you have any question about this research or our findings, please contact nicolas.roulin@smu.ca.