

# Evaluating Applicant Faking via “Bright” and “Dark-Side” Measures of Personality

Nicole R. Bourdeau

Hogan Assessment Systems

Paper presented at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology  
Los Angeles, CA April 16, 2005

Jared D. Lock

Hogan Assessment Systems

Despite recent and consistent findings supporting the predictive and construct validity of personality assessments, “faking” is still considered an issue within employee selection contexts. This paper evaluates whether positive response distortion represents faking or, conversely, valid and interpretable variance by assessing profile correspondence on measures of “bright-” and “dark-side” personality. The results indicate that positive response distortion on measures of personality does not necessarily imply faking, but rather, represents substantive, interpretable, and valid trait variance.

The foundation of personality research has been plagued by the so-called “faking debate,” which has been the major catalyst behind the waxing and waning of interest in personality assessment within the context of employee selection decisions over the last sixty-five years. However, research has consistently demonstrated both the robust validity (e.g., Hogan & Holland, 2003; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991) and reliability (e.g., Costa, Herbst, McCrae, & Siegler, 2000; Costa & McCrae, 2002) of carefully constructed and theory-based measures of personality. Despite recent and consistent findings in support of the predictive and construct validity of personality assessments, it is clear that “faking” is still considered an issue within the context of employee selection; this paper will address this perception.

## *The Many Names of Response Distortion*

One potential explanation for the proliferation of research on the topic of response distortion is the fact that the construct has been described by various terms, including social desirability, impression management, faking, intentional distortion, and self enhancement (Hough, Eaton, Dunnette, Kamp, & McCloy, 1990; Ellingson, Sackett, & Hough., 1999; Viswesvaran & Ones, 1999). Unfortunately, these terms do not describe the same construct.

The majority of studies investigating the effects of response distortion have considered it to be a unitary construct (Barrick & Mount, 1996). However, considerable research has demonstrated that response distortion consists of two unique and validated constructs: self-deception and impression management (Paulhus, 1984; 1988; 1989; Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987). According to Paulhus and his associates, *self deception* is a disposition-based tendency to consider oneself in a favorable light, while *impression management* refers to intentional distortion of one’s responses in order to create a favorable impression (i.e., faking). Based on these definitions, socially desirable

response patterns can result from self deception *or* impression management. However, “faking,” and its associated negative connotation, can intuitively be considered a form of impression management. Due to the potential for semantic confusion regarding the causes of socially desirable response patterns, the following research is designed to clearly distinguish between constructs of self deception and impression management (i.e., faking).

## *The “Faking Debate”*

Despite claims that job applicants are motivated to portray themselves in an excessively positive light when completing personality assessments for employee selection purposes, several empirical studies have confirmed that positive response distortion has little impact upon the construct and predictive validity of personality inventories when used for employee selection purposes. Specifically, Smith and Ellingson (2002) found that, under realistic conditions (rather than on the basis of instructions designed to artificially induce socially desirable or “fake good” responding), positive response distortion had little impact on the construct validity of personality measures. These findings, in addition to earlier findings (e.g., McCrae & Costa, 1983; Nicholson & Hogan, 1990), help confirm that positive response distortion is comprised of substantive, interpretable, and valid trait variance, and should not be considered error variance. Similarly, considerable research has demonstrated that positive response distortion does not impact the predictive validity of personality measures (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1996; Christiansen, Goffin, Johnson, & Rothstein, 1994; Hough et al., 1990; Ones, Viswesvaran, & Schmidt, 1993; Ones, Viswesvaran & Reiss, 1996).

On the other hand, steadfast critics of personality assessment continue to assert that the predictive validity of personality assessments is degraded by positive response distortion. Indeed, a considerable amount of research has demonstrated that personality measures are “fakeable” (e.g., Barrick & Mount, 1996; Dicken, 1960;

Dunnette, Koun, & Barber, 1981; Dunnette, McCartney, Carlson, & Kirchner, 1962; Furnham & Craig, 1987; Thornton & Gierash, 1980); however, in actuality, these studies really demonstrate that, *when instructed*, respondents can successfully distort their scores in the manner specified. In truth, these assertions cannot be denied – research has indeed demonstrated that personality inventories comprised of transparent, or face valid, items (e.g., “I am very dependable,” “I am very thorough in the work I do,” “I am very sociable”) facilitate positive response distortion, or “faking” (Alliger, Lilienfeld, & Mitchell, 1995; Hough et al., 1990; Furnham, 1986; White, Nord, Mael, & Young, 1993). In addition to the blatant social desirability of items within many Big-Five measures of personality, “many items are obviously ‘correct’ when applying for a job” (e.g., ‘I am a productive person,’ ‘I don’t like to waste time’) (Rosse, Stecher, Miller, & Levin, 1998). Given these conditions, it would be surprising if most applicants did *not* distort at least some of their item responses (Rosse et al.).

The sum of the faking research appears to point to three conclusions: First, socially competent individuals are capable of inflating their scores on transparent measures of normal personality. Second, even when positive response distortion is evident, the criterion and construct validity of personality assessments are negligibly impacted. Third, socially desirable response patterns on personality assessments may introduce redundant variance, but not error variance, into the prediction of job performance in actual applicant settings (e.g., Ones et al., 1996).

Overall, and for the purposes of this paper, the “faking debate” can be distilled down to two competing views: (a) positive response distortion is a deliberate distortion that invalidates selection decisions made on the basis of measures of normal personality and (b) positive response distortion is actually valid and interpretable variance – “respondents consider their responses indicative of their actual personality traits and view those responses as part of their inherent conceptualization of themselves” (Ellingson, Sackett, & Hough, 1999, pp. 29). The merits of these two competing views can be evaluated by assessing the correspondence between individuals’ responses on two orthogonal measures of personality – the Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI; Hogan & Hogan, 1995) and the Hogan Development Survey (HDS; Hogan & Hogan, 1997).

The HPI is a measure of normal personality that provides information regarding the “bright side” of personality – characteristics that (a) are evident during day-to-day social interaction, (b) facilitate or inhibit an individual’s ability to get along with others, and (c) impact an individual’s ability to achieve work-related or occupational goals (Hogan & Hogan, 1995).

Conversely, the HDS is designed to assess the “dark side” of personality - dysfunctional characteristics that undermine an individual’s ability to (a) accomplish work and achieve results through others, (b) build effective teams, and (c) maintain valuable relationships (Hogan & Hogan, 1997).

### *Hypotheses*

Given that the HPI assesses characteristics that can potentially advance careers and the HDS assesses characteristics that can potentially degrade or derail careers, it seems both likely and plausible that individuals attempting to portray themselves in a socially desirable manner would attempt to answer HPI items in a manner that would yield elevations across all seven HPI scales. It seems equally likely and plausible that the same individuals would attempt to answer HDS items in a manner that would yield consistently low scale scores on the HDS. Therefore, if “faking” is indeed true distortion, uniformly *high* scale scores on the HPI (“faking”) should predict uniformly *low* scores on the HDS (“faking”). On the other hand, if positive response distortion is valid variance, then high scores on the HPI should predict high scores only on HDS factors that tap into a respondent’s overly positive self view.

***Hypothesis 1a:*** Assuming faking is true response distortion, uniformly high scale scores on the HPI should predict uniformly low scale scores on the HDS.

***Hypothesis 1b:*** Assuming faking is valid variance, uniformly high scale scores on the HPI should predict high scores on the HDS Bold, Mischievous, and Colorful scales.

***Hypothesis 2:*** Individuals having HPI profiles characterized by the most positive response distortion should have significantly lower mean scale scores across all HDS scales.

### **Method**

#### *Participants*

The sample included individuals applying for executive- or managerial-level jobs who completed the HPI and HDS for selection purposes (N = 1,575). The sample was comprised primarily of white (91%) males (73%) from across all industry classifications in the U.S Department of Labor’s *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (1991).

*Measures*

*Hogan Personality Inventory.* The Hogan Personality Inventory (HPI; Hogan & Hogan, 1995) is a 206-item measures of personality based on Five-Factor Model. The HPI contains seven primary scales and a validity scale, aimed at detecting careless or erratic responding. The HPI concerns strengths and skills that enhance individuals’ careers – bright side personality tendencies that are quickly noticed by others (see Table 1). The HPI scales demonstrate construct validity in terms of both test-test relations and test-non-test relations (Hogan & Hogan, 1995). The average internal reliability coefficient across HPI scales is .80, and test-retest reliability coefficients average .82. Raw HPI scale scores are converted into percentile scores based on a national normative database (N = 51,053).

**Table 1. HPI Scale Definitions**

<i>Adjustment</i>	Measures the degree to which a person appears calm and self-confident or, conversely, self-critical and tense
<i>Ambition</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems socially self-confident, leaderlike, competitive, and energetic
<i>Sociability</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems to need and/or enjoy interacting with others
<i>Interpersonal Sensitivity</i>	Measures the degree to which a person is seen as perceptive, tactful, and socially sensitive
<i>Prudence</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems conscientious, conforming, and dependable
<i>Inquisitive</i>	Measures the degree to which a person is perceived as bright, creative, and interested in intellectual matters
<i>Learning Approach</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems to enjoy academic activities and value educational achievement for its own sake

*Hogan Development Survey.* The Hogan Development Survey (HDS; Hogan & Hogan, 1997) is a 168-item paper-and-pencil assessment. The HDS assesses eleven patterns of dysfunctional interpersonal behavior that are most apparent during times of stress, change, heavy workloads, or when individuals are otherwise not managing their public appearance. The behaviors assessed by the HDS may impede the development of strong working relationships with others, hinder productivity, and/or limit overall career potential (see Table 2).

Each of the eleven HDS scales can be assigned to one of three clusters, defined in terms of Karen Horney’s (1950) taxonomy of flawed interpersonal tendencies (see

Table 2). These flawed interpersonal strategies can be categorized in three ways: (a) moving away from people (e.g., managing feelings of inadequacy by avoiding contact with others), (b) moving against people (e.g., managing self-doubt by dominating and intimidating others), and (c) moving toward people (e.g., managing insecurity by building alliances) (Hogan & Hogan, 1997).

The HDS scales demonstrate construct validity in terms of convergent and divergent validity with test and non-test correlates (Hogan & Hogan, 1997). The average internal reliability coefficient across HDS scales is .67, and test-retest reliability coefficients average .75. Raw HDS scale scores are converted into percentile scores based on a national normative database (N = 2,071).

**Table 2. HDS Scale Definitions**

<b>Cluster One: Moving Away</b>	
<i>Excitable</i>	Moody and hard to please; intense, but short lived, enthusiasm for people, projects, and things
<i>Skeptical</i>	Cynical, distrustful, and doubtful of others’ true intentions
<i>Cautious</i>	Reluctant to take risks for fear of being rejected or negatively evaluated
<i>Reserved</i>	Aloof, detached, and uncommunicative; lacking interest in or awareness of the feelings of others
<i>Leisurely</i>	Independent; ignoring peoples’ requests and becoming irritated or argumentative if they persist
<b>Cluster Two: Moving Against</b>	
<i>Bold</i>	Unusually self-confident; feelings of grandiosity and entitlement; over-evaluation of one’s capabilities
<i>Mischievous</i>	Enjoys risk taking and testing limits; needs excitement; manipulative, deceitful, cunning, and exploitative
<i>Colorful</i>	Expressive, animated, and dramatic; wanting to be noticed and needing to be the center of attention
<i>Imaginative</i>	Acting and thinking in creative and sometimes odd and unusual ways
<b>Cluster Three: Moving Toward</b>	
<i>Diligent</i>	Meticulous, precise, and perfectionistic; inflexible about rules and procedures; critical of others’ performance
<i>Dutiful</i>	Eager to please and reliant on others for support and guidance; reluctant to take independent action or go against popular opinion

### Procedure

The matched HPI and HDS data set ( $N = 1,575$ ) was segregated into six mutually exclusive groups, representing varying degrees of positive response distortion on the HPI (see Table 3). Participants' percentile scores across the seven HPI scales were averaged to yield an index of positive response distortion. Participants whose average percentile score on the HPI fell between the 90<sup>th</sup> to 100<sup>th</sup> percentile across all seven HPI scales were considered to have the HPI profiles characterized by the most positive response distortion (e.g., consistently endorsing HPI items in a positive direction), while individuals having an average scale score at or below the 49<sup>th</sup> percentile across all seven scales were considered to have HPI profiles characterized by the least amount of positive response distortion. In addition to the two groups representing the extremes of the social desirability spectrum on the HPI, four intermediary groups were formed representing individuals (a) having an average scale score between the 80<sup>th</sup> to 89<sup>th</sup> percentile, (b) having an average scale score between the 70<sup>th</sup> to 79<sup>th</sup> percentile, (c) having an average scale score between the 60<sup>th</sup> to 69<sup>th</sup> percentile, and

(d) having an average scale score between the 50<sup>th</sup> to 59<sup>th</sup> percentile across all seven HPI scales. These groups were considered to represent decreasing levels of positive response distortion, respectively.

**Table 3. HPI-Based Index of Socially Desirable Responding**

Index of Social Desirable Responding	Average of all HPI Scale Percentile Scores	Frequency within Sample	% of Sample
Most Socially Desirable	100% - 90%	25	1.6%
	89% - 80%	197	12.5%
	79% - 70%	340	21.6%
	69% - 60%	412	26.2%
	59% - 50%	296	18.8%
Least Socially Desirable	49% - 0%	305	19.4%

**Table 4. ANOVA: Comparing Mean HDS Scale Scores in terms of the HPI Social Desirability Index**

HDS Scale	Source of Variance	df	MS	F	Sig.
Excitable	Between Groups	5	510.07	129.04	.000
	Within Groups	1,569	3.95		
Skeptical	Between Groups	5	106.17	25.51	.000
	Within Groups	1,569	4.16		
Cautious	Between Groups	5	538.30	137.90	.000
	Within Groups	1,569	3.90		
Reserved	Between Groups	5	357.61	100.41	.000
	Within Groups	1,569	3.56		
Leisurely	Between Groups	5	68.32	16.82	.000
	Within Groups	1,568	4.06		
Bold	Between Groups	5	71.58	11.66	.000
	Within Groups	1,568	6.14		
Mischievous	Between Groups	5	84.36	15.17	.000
	Within Groups	1,569	5.56		
Colorful	Between Groups	5	341.87	45.40	.000
	Within Groups	1,569	7.53		
Imaginative	Between Groups	5	12.44	2.14	.058
	Within Groups	1,568	5.81		
Diligent	Between Groups	5	16.62	2.84	.015
	Within Groups	1,569	5.85		
Dutiful	Between Groups	5	6.50	1.65	.145
	Within Groups	1,569	3.95		

HDS profiles were examined on the basis of the index of socially desirable responding established via the HPI. A graphic profile was created to illustrate the relationship between the HPI-based social desirability index and mean HDS scale scores (see Figure 1).

Additionally, an ANOVA analysis was conducted to identify mean differences in HDS scale scores across participants responding to the HPI with various degrees of socially desirable responding.

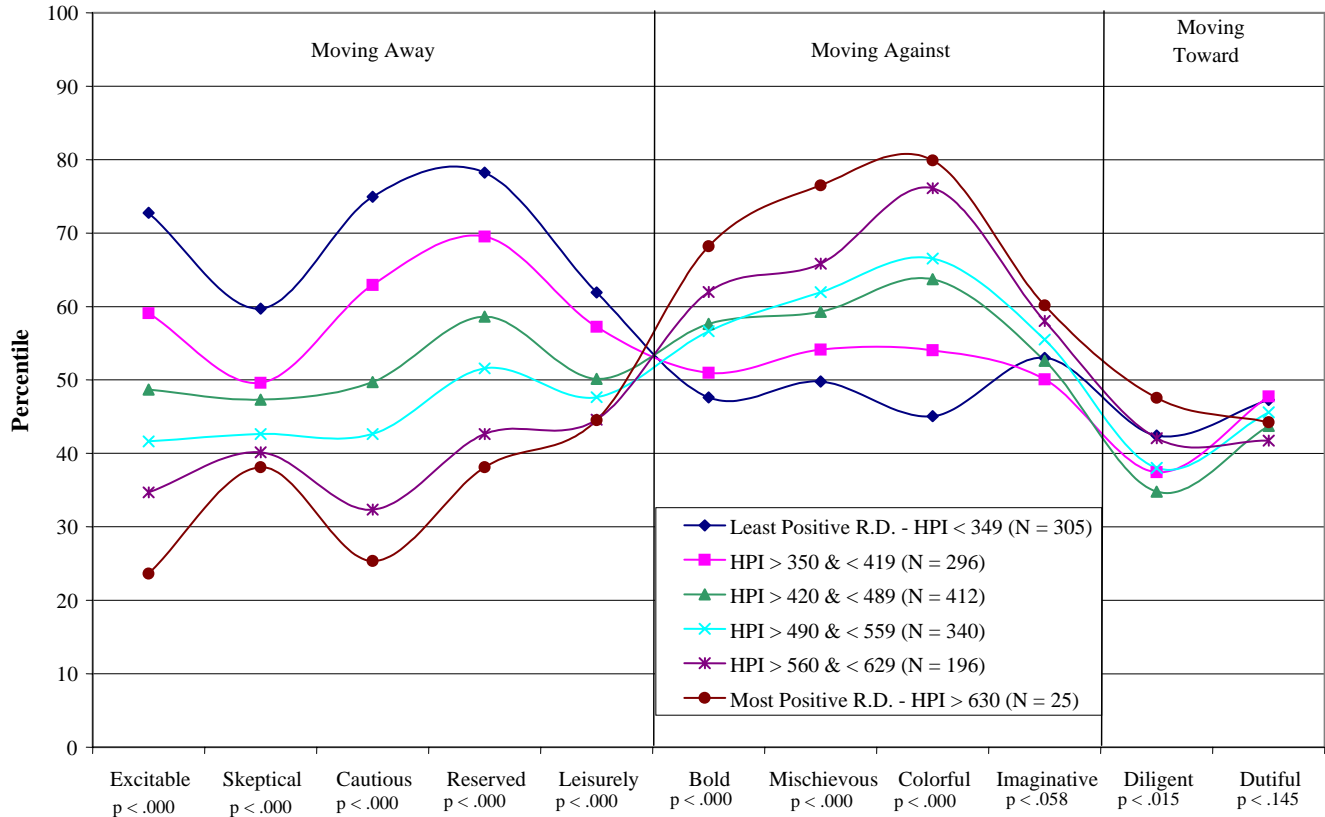
**Results**

Figure 1 illustrates that positive response distortion, or uniformly high scale scores across all HPI scales, is not consistently associated with uniformly lower scale scores across all HDS scales, disconfirming hypothesis 1a. Consistent with hypothesis 1b, individuals responding to the HPI with the most positive response distortion exhibited depressed mean scale scores on the Moving Away cluster of HDS scales (i.e., Excitable, Skeptical, Cautious, Reserved, and Leisurely scales) and the Moving Towards cluster of HDS scales (i.e., Diligent and Dutiful scales); however, individuals responding to the HPI with the most positive response distortion had the *highest* mean scale scores on the Moving Against cluster of the HDS (i.e., Bold, Mischievous, Colorful, and Imaginative).

The results of the ANOVA analysis, as shown in Table 4, indicate that individuals responding to HPI

items with varying degrees of positive response distortion had significantly different mean scale scores across the Moving Away cluster of scales on the HDS ( $p < .000$ ). Specifically, individuals responding to the HPI in an increasingly socially-desirable manner exhibited lower HDS mean scale scores on the Excitable, Skeptical, Cautious, Reserved, and Leisurely scales, as expected. Conversely, individuals responding to the HPI in an increasingly socially desirable manner exhibited significantly and increasingly *higher* elevations on the HDS Bold, Mischievous, and Colorful scales ( $p < .000$ ), three of the four scales comprising the Moving Against cluster of HDS scales. Finally, participants did not differ with respect to their mean scale scores on the HDS Imaginative, Diligent, and Dutiful scales, irrespective of the degree to which they exhibited positive response distortion on the HPI. These results disconfirm hypothesis 2.

**Figure 1: Comparing HDS Profiles Based on HPI Social Desirability Index**



### Discussion

The debate surrounding personality assessment's susceptibility to positive response distortion has pervaded the field nearly since its inception. The results of the present study strongly suggest that HPI profiles characterized by elevations across all seven scales are interpretable and valid, and not indicative of faking or impression management. The pattern of consistent elevation across the HPI designates individuals who are socially-skilled, sensitive to social feedback, slick, manipulative, and capable of deceit – personal characteristics that are all derived from an excessively positive self image. However, the same individuals who responded to the HPI with the highest degree of positive response distortion endorsed one factor of the HDS, a measure of dysfunctional personal characteristics, with least degree of positive response distortion. In other words, although their responses on the HPI portrayed them in a socially desirable manner, their responses on the HDS did not. These individuals' HDS profiles suggested that, in certain situations, they are significantly more prone to (a) being impulsive, demanding, self-aggrandizing, and blaming their mistakes on others (b) testing limits, taking ill-advised risks, and downplaying mistakes and commitments, and (c) being self-promoting, easily angered, and quickly bored, characteristics associated with considerable elevations on the HDS Bold, Mischievous, and Colorful scales, respectively.

Unlike previous research, the majority of which relied upon instructional manipulations designed to artificially induce socially desirable responding, the current study involved no such instructions. Participants included in the present study completed both the HPI and HDS under realistic conditions, for employee selection purposes; participants were simply instructed to “read each item, decide how you feel about it, and then select your answer.”

Similar to Smith and Ellingson's (2002) research, the current research supports the assertion that “faking” is indeed valid and interpretable variance. According to Hogan (1991), “there is a large and replicated literature showing that well-adjusted people have positively biased self-images; consequently, well-adjusted people tend to ignore minor criticisms, discount their failures, avoid negative thoughts, and expect to succeed in most of their undertakings,” findings that are consistent with the results of the current study.

### Limitations

Despite the significant effects observed in the current study, some limitations must be acknowledged. First, the distribution of participants responding to the HPI with various degrees of positive response distortion is not normally or proportionally distributed (see Table 3). Although over 1,500 cases were used in the present study, only 25 of these cases were classified within the category representing the highest degree of response distortion (i.e., 1.6% of the total sample); the small size of this participant subgroup could potentially be cause for sampling error. However, the current findings would continue to be supported if participants scoring at or above the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile, on average, across all HPI scales, were considered to represent the highest degree of positive response distortion (as opposed to solely individuals scoring at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile). Second, the algorithm for determining the extent of positive response distortion is somewhat flawed, in that it is a compensatory formula. For example, in order for a participant to be classified as exhibiting the highest degree of socially desirable responding on the HPI, his or her average percentile scale score, across all seven HPI scales, would have to be at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile; therefore, a somewhat higher score on one scale could compensate for a somewhat lower percentile score on another scale. Finally, further research should be conducted in order to attempt to replicate the current study using other measures of normal, “day-to-day” personality.

Despite the limitations of the current study, the results indicate that, within the context of personnel selection, positive response distortion on measures of personality does not necessarily imply “faking,” but rather, represents substantive, interpretable, and valid trait variance. Although, realistically, these results will likely have minimal impact in terms of halting the persistent “faking debate,” it is our hope that this research will stimulate further investigations contributing to an empirically-based resolution of the faking issue that continues to pervade personality psychology.

## References

- Alliger, G.M., Lilienfeld, S.O., & Mitchell, K.E. (1995). The susceptibility of overt and covert integrity tests to coaching and faking. *Psychological Science, 7*, 32-39.
- Barrick, M.B. & Mount, M.K. (1996). Effects of impression management and self-deception on the predictive validity of personality constructs. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*, 261-272.
- Barrick, M.R., & Mount, M.K. (1991). The big-five personality dimensions and job performance: A meta-analysis. *Personnel Psychology, 44*, 1-26.
- Christiansen, N.D., Goffin, R.D., Johnston, N.G., & Rothstein, M.G. (1994). Correcting the 16PF for faking: Effects on criterion-related validity and individual hiring decisions. *Personnel Psychology, 47*, 847-860.
- Costa, P.T., Jr., & McCrae, R.R. (2002). Looking backward: Changes in the mean levels of personality traits from 80 to 12. In D. Cervone & W. Michel (Eds.) *Advances in personality science*. New York: Guilford, Pp. 219-237.
- Costa, P.T. Jr., Herbst, J.H., & McCrae, R.R., & Siegler, I.C. (2002). Personality at midlife. *Assessment, 7*, 365-378.
- Dicken, C. (1963). Good impression, social desirability, and acquiescence as suppressor variables. *Educational and Psychological Measurement, 23*, 699-720.
- United States Department of Labor (1991). *Dictionary of occupational titles*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- Dunnette, D., Koun, S., & Barber, P.J. (1981). Social desirability in the Eyesenck Personality Inventory. *British Journal of Psychology, 72*, 19-26.
- Dunnette, M.D., McCartney, J., Carlson, H.C., & Kirschner, W.K. (1962). A study of faking behavior on a forced choice self-description checklist. *Personnel Psychology, 15*, 13-24.
- Ellingson, J.E., Sackett, P.R., & Hough, L.M. (1999). Social desirability corrections in personality measurement: Issues of applicant comparison and construct validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 84*, 155-166.
- Furnham, A. (1986). Response bias, social desirability and dissimulation. *Personality and Individual Differences, 7*, 385-400.
- Furnham, A., & Craig, S. (1987). Fakability and correlates of the perception and preference inventory. *Personality and Individual Differences, 8*, 459-470.
- Hogan, R.T. (1991). Personality and personality measurement. (In M.D. Dunnette & L.M. Hough (Eds.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 873-919). Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Hogan, R., & Hogan, J. (1995). *Hogan Personality Inventory manual* (2nd ed.). Tulsa, OK: Hogan Assessment Systems.
- Hogan, R.T., & Hogan, J.C. (1997). *Hogan Development Survey Manual*. Tulsa, OK: Hogan Assessment Systems.
- Hogan, J., & Holland, B. (2003). Using theory to evaluate personality and job-performance relations: A socioanalytic perspective. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*, 100-112.
- Horney, K. (1950). *Neurosis and human growth*. New York: Norton.
- Hough, L.M., Eaton, N.K., Dunnette, M.D., Kamp, J.D., & McCloy, R.A. (1990). Criterion-related validities of personality constructs and the effects of response distortion on those validities [Monograph]. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 75*, 581-585.
- Judge, T.A., Bono, J.E., Ilies, R., & Gerhardt, M.W. (2002). Personality and leadership: A qualitative and quantitative review. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 765-780.
- McRae, R.R., & Costa, P.T., Jr. (1983). Social desirability scales: More substance than style. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51*, 882-888.
- Nicholson, R.A., & Hogan, R.T. (1990). The construct validity of social desirability. *American Psychologist, 45*, 290-292.
- Ones, D. S., Viswesvaran, C., & Reiss, A. D. (1996). Role of social desirability in personality testing for personnel selection: The red herring. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*, 660-679.
- Ones, D. S., Viswesvaran, C., & Schmidt, F.L. (1993). Comprehensive meta-analysis of integrity test validities: Findings and implications for personnel selection and theories of job performance [Monograph]. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*, 679-703.
- Paulhus, D.L. (1984). Two-component model of socially desirable responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 46*, 598-609.
- Paul, D.L. (1988). Measurement and control of response bias. In J.P. Robinson, P. Shaver, & L. Wrightsman (Eds). *Measures of personality and social psychological attitudes* (Vol. 1, pp. 17-60). New York: Academic Press.

- Paulhus, D.L. (1989). Socially desirable responding: Some new solutions to old problems. In D.M. Buss & N. Cantor (Eds.), *Personality psychology: Recent trends and emerging directions* (pp. 201-209). New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Paulhus, D.L., & Reid, D.B. (1991). Enhancement and denial in socially desirable responding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *60*, 307-317.
- Rosse, J.G., Stecher, M.D., Miller, J.L., & Levin, R.A. (1998). The impact of response distortion on preemployment personality testing and hiring decisions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *83*(4), 634-644.
- Smith, D.B., & Ellingson, J.E. (2002). Substance versus style: A new look at social desirability in motivating contexts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(2) 211-219.
- Tett, R.P., Jackson, D.N., & Rothstein, M. (1991). Personality measures as predictors of job performance: A meta-analytic review. *Personnel Psychology*, *44*, 703-742.
- Thornton, G.C., III, & Gierasch, P.F., III. (1980). Fakability of an empirically derived selection instrument. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *44*, 48-51.
- Viswesvaran, C., & Ones, D.S. (1999). Meta-analyses of fakability estimates: Implications for personality measurement. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *59*, 197-210.
- White, L.A., Nord, R.D., Mael, F.A., & Young, M.C. (1993). The assessment of background and life experiences (ABLE). In T.H. Trent and Laurence (Eds.), *Adaptability screening for the Armed Forces*, (pp. 101-161). Washington, DC: Office for the Assistant Secretary of Defense.
- Zerbe, W.J., & Paulhus, D.L. (1987). Socially desirable responding in organizational behavior: A reconception. *Academy of Management Review*, *12*, 250-264.



# Evaluating Applicant Faking via “Bright-” and “Dark-Side” Measures of Personality



T h e S c i e n c e o f P e r s o n a l i t y™

**Nicole R. Bourdeau**

**Jared D. Lock**

---

# Introduction

Despite recent and consistent findings in support of the predictive and construct validity of personality assessments, it is clear that faking is still considered an issue within the context of employee selection

This following research evaluates whether positive response distortion represents “faking” or, conversely, valid and interpretable variance, by assessing profile correspondence on measures of “bright-” and “dark-side” personality

# The ‘Faking Debate’

## Two competing views:

- ◆ Positive response distortion is deliberate distortion that invalidates selection decisions made on the basis of measures of normal personality
- ◆ Positive response distortion is actually valid and interpretable variance

# Faking vs. Response Distortion

- ◆ Response distortion consists of two unique and validated constructs: self-deception and impression management  
(Paulhus, 1984; 1988; 1989; Paulhus & Reid, 1991; Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987)
  - ◆ **Self Deception** - A disposition-based tendency to consider oneself in a favorable light
  - ◆ **Impression Management** - Intentional distortion of one's responses in order to create a favorable impression (i.e., faking)
- ◆ The following research is designed to clearly distinguish between constructs of self deception and impression management

# Hypotheses

**H1a:**

Assuming faking is true response distortion, uniformly *high* scale scores on the HPI (“faking”) should predict uniformly *low* scale scores on the HDS (“faking”)

**H1b:**

Assuming faking is valid variance, uniformly *high* scale scores on the HPI should predict *high* scores on the HDS Bold, Mischievous, and Colorful scales, scales that tap into a respondent’s overly positive self-view

**H2:**

Individuals having HPI profiles characterized by the most positive response distortion should have significantly lower mean scale scores across *all* HDS scales

# Method

## ◆ Participants

- ◆ Individuals applying for executive- or managerial-level jobs who completed the HPI and HDS for selection purposes (N = 1,575) from across all industry classifications in the U.S Department of Labor's *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (1991)

## ◆ Measures

- ◆ **Hogan Personality Inventory** (HPI; Hogan & Hogan, 1995) - Assesses the strengths and skills that enhance individuals' careers
- ◆ **Hogan Development Survey** (HDS; Hogan & Hogan, 1997) - Assesses eleven patterns of dysfunctional interpersonal behavior that are most apparent during times of stress, change, heavy workloads, or when individuals are otherwise not managing their public appearance

# Hogan Personality Inventory

---

<i>Adjustment</i>	Measures the degree to which a person appears calm and self-confident or, conversely, self-critical and tense
<i>Ambition</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems socially self-confident, leaderlike, competitive, and energetic
<i>Sociability</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems to need and/or enjoy interacting with others
<i>Interpersonal Sensitivity</i>	Measures the degree to which a person is seen as perceptive, tactful, and socially-sensitive
<i>Prudence</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems conscientious, conforming, and dependable
<i>Inquisitive</i>	Measures the degree to which a person is perceived as bright, creative, and interested in intellectual matters
<i>Learning Approach</i>	Measures the degree to which a person seems to enjoy academic activities and value educational achievement for its own sake

# Hogan Development Survey

---

## Moving Away

<i>Excitable</i>	Moody and hard to please; intense, but short lived, enthusiasm for people, projects, and things
<i>Skeptical</i>	Cynical, distrustful, and doubtful of others' true intentions
<i>Cautious</i>	Reluctant to take risks for fear of being rejected or negatively evaluated
<i>Reserved</i>	Aloof, detached, and uncommunicative; lacking interest in or awareness of the feelings of others
<i>Leisurely</i>	Independent; ignoring peoples' requests and becoming irritated or argumentative if they persist

## Moving Against

<i>Bold</i>	Unusually self-confident; feelings of grandiosity and entitlement; over-evaluation of one's capabilities
<i>Mischievous</i>	Enjoys risk taking and testing limits; needs excitement; manipulative, deceitful, cunning, and exploitative
<i>Colorful</i>	Expressive, animated, and dramatic; wanting to be noticed and needing to be the center of attention
<i>Imaginative</i>	Acting and thinking in creative and sometimes odd and unusual ways

## Moving Toward

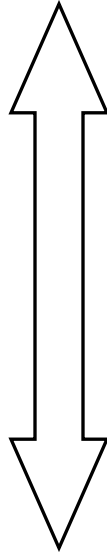
<i>Diligent</i>	Meticulous, precise, perfectionistic; inflexible about rules and procedures; critical of others' performance
<i>Dutiful</i>	Eager to please, reliant on others for support and guidance; reluctant to take independent action



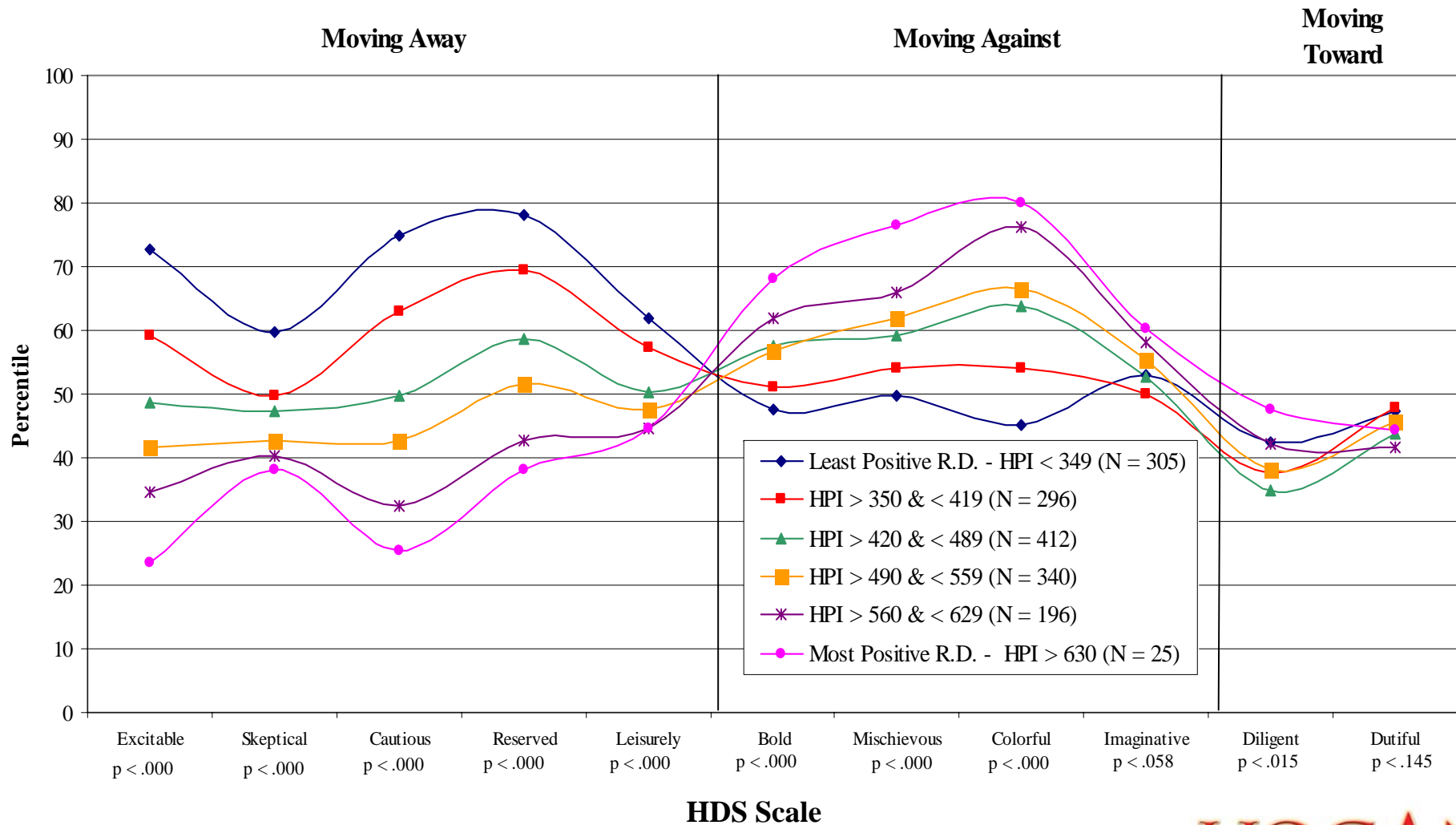
# Method (continued)

- ◆ Matched HPI and HDS data (N = 1,575) were segregated into six mutually exclusive groups, representing varying degrees of positive response distortion on the HPI
- ◆ HDS profiles were examined on the basis of the index of socially desirable responding established via the HPI
- ◆ An ANOVA analysis was conducted to identify mean differences in HDS scale scores across participants responding to the HPI with various degrees of socially desirable responding

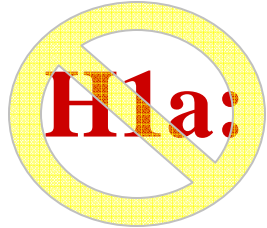
# Index of Socially Desirable Responding

Index of Social Desirable Responding	Average of all HPI Scale Percentile Scores	Frequency within Sample	Percentage of Sample
Most Socially Desirable	100% - 90%	25	1.6%
	89% - 80%	197	12.5%
	79% - 70%	340	21.6%
	69% - 60%	412	26.2%
	59% - 50%	296	18.8%
	Least Socially Desirable	49% - 0%	305

# Comparing HDS Profiles Based on HPI Social Desirability Index



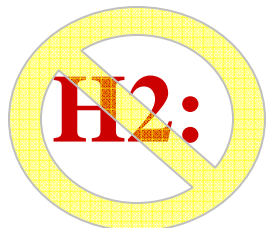
# Results



Assuming faking is true response distortion, uniformly *high* scale scores on the HPI (“faking”) should predict uniformly *low* scale scores on the HDS (“faking”)

**H1b:**

Assuming faking is valid variance, uniformly *high* scale scores on the HPI should predict *high* scores on the HDS Bold, Mischievous, and Colorful scales, scales that tap into a respondent’s overly positive self-view



Individuals having HPI profiles characterized by the most positive response distortion should have significantly lower mean scale scores across *all* HDS scales

# Results (continued)

- ◆ Individuals responding to the HPI in an increasingly socially-desirable manner exhibited *lower* HDS mean scale scores on the “Moving Away” cluster of HDS scales (Excitable, Skeptical, Cautious, Reserved, Leisurely)
- ◆ Individuals responding to the HPI in an increasingly socially desirable manner exhibited significantly and increasingly *higher* elevations on the HDS Bold, Mischievous, and Colorful scales, three of the four scales comprising the “Moving Against” cluster of HDS scales
- ◆ Individuals did not differ with respect to their mean scale scores on the HDS Imaginative, Diligent, and Dutiful scales, irrespective of the degree to which they exhibited positive response distortion on the HPI

# Discussion

- ◆ Results support the assertion that “faking” is indeed valid and interpretable variance
- ◆ Individuals who responded to the HPI with the *highest* degree of positive response distortion endorsed one factor of the HDS with the *least* degree of positive response distortion (i.e., their responses on the HPI portrayed them in a socially desirable manner, their responses on the HDS did not)
- ◆ Participants included in the present study completed both the HPI and HDS under realistic conditions, for employee selection purposes; participants were simply instructed to “read each item, decide how you feel about it, and then select your answer”

# Conclusion

Within the context of personnel selection, positive response distortion on measures of personality *does not necessarily* imply “faking,” but rather, represents substantive, interpretable, and valid trait variance

# Future Directions

- ◆ Future research should aim to:
  - ◆ Replicate the results of the current study via a larger participant sample
  - ◆ Replicate the results of the current study via other valid and conceptually-sound measures of “bright-” and “dark-side” personality
  - ◆ Utilize a non-compensatory index of positive response distortion