Short Communication

Does perceived ability to deceive = ability to deceive? Predictive validity of the perceived ability to deceive (PATD) scale

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ABSTRACT

This research investigated whether the perceived ability to deceive (PATD) scale predicts ability to deceive in a vocational testing context. Using a quasi-experimental design, participants ($N = 85$ student and community members) completed the PATD scale and a personality measure under standard instructions before being asked to fake the personality measure as if they were applying for a job in the police force. Based on extant research, successful faking was operationalised as elevated scores on conscientiousness and extraversion and reduced scores on neuroticism. Analysis via independent t-test did not support the hypothesis that PATD predicts faking success. Future research should consider the relationship between PATD and intention to fake, as well as extend examination of PATD to other deception-related contexts.

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1. Introduction

The effect of faking on test validity in psychological assessment is well established, with individuals able to alter their test score profiles in a number of ways (Rogers, 2008). Although researchers have attempted to identify the precursors of faking, and have presented models of faking behaviour (e.g. Goffin & Boyd, 2009; McFarland & Ryan, 2006; Snell, Sydell, & Lueke, 1999), to date, empirical testing of these models is limited. Most recently, Schneider and Goffin (2012) argued that perceived ability to deceive (PATD) might be an important construct to consider as a possible antecedent to faking in vocational contexts, and provided initial evidence of reliability and construct validity for a PATD scale. The current research aimed to extend examination of the validity of the PATD scale to include predictive validity. Specifically, the goal of the current research was to investigate whether perceived ability to deceive predicts ability to deceive when faking in a vocational context.

Schneider and Goffin (2012) defined PATD as the perception individuals have of their ability to successfully deceive. Using a cross-sectional design, Schneider and Goffin investigated the role of PATD in self-reported counterproductive workplace behaviours (CWB). Results were that PATD predicted CWB over and above con-

scientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability and honesty-humility when assessed in a series of hierarchical regressions. PATD accounted for between 5% and 15% of additional variance in self-reported CWB. The authors concluded that the PATD scale demonstrated good initial evidence of validity in the prediction of behaviours that might be relevant in a faking related context, and suggested that, in line with Goffin and Boyd's (2009) model, PATD might be an important antecedent to actual faking in future psychological assessment.

The proposed relationship between an individual's perception of their ability in a domain and behavioural outcomes in that domain align with existing research regarding self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as "beliefs in one's capabilities to organise and execute the courses of action required to produce a given attainment" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3). Higher levels of self-efficacy in a particular domain have been shown to be related to improved performance in that domain, for example academic functioning (Caprara, Vecchione, Alessandri, Gerbino, & Barbaranelli, 2011) and physical activity (Haas, 2011). It follows that increased perceptions of, and confidence in, one's ability to deceive may be related to an improved performance when engaging in actual deception.

However, although Schneider and Goffin's (2012) study showed evidence of an association between PATD and CWB, a limitation was that only self-reported behaviours were assessed. The current research investigated the relationship between PATD and ability to successfully deceive within the context of a vocational assessment using an objective outcome measure. A key element of the current research was that we were interested only in whether PATD

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predicted *successful* deception. To achieve this, it was necessary to examine the extant literature on assessment for vocational purposes. We selected a job that is broadly familiar to the population: police officer. Detrick and Chibnall (2006) investigated the preferred police personality by asking police field training officers to describe the personality characteristics previously exhibited by the "best entry-level police officer" (p. 276) they had ever supervised using the NEO PI-R observer report form. The field training officers returned profiles indicating that high levels of extraversion and conscientiousness, in combination with low levels of neuroticism were desirable characteristics for an entry-level police officer. Following Grieve and Mahar's (2010) model, we defined successful faking as occurring when an individual alters their original personality profile to a strategic profile that matches the target criteria set by the psychometric assessor. Within the context of applying for a job as a police officer, we therefore classified successful fakers as those who presented a strategic profile of elevated Extraversion and Conscientiousness while simultaneously suppressing Neuroticism.

Although no extant research has investigated PATD and successful faking in a vocational context, we drew on the previous research regarding self-efficacy and behavioural outcomes (e.g. Caprara et al., 2011; Haas, 2011) in order to generate a hypothesis. It was hypothesised that PATD would predict ability to deceive, with greater PATD associated with successful faking.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Participants were 85 undergraduates ($n = 48$) and members of the general Australian community ($n = 37$). This sample size exceeds Cohen's (1992) recommendations for .80 power to find a medium effect ($\alpha = .05$). The majority of the sample was female (75%). The mean age of the sample was 27.52 years ($SD = 9.35$). No selection criteria were used.

2.2. Design

A quasi-experimental design was used. The predictor variable was perceived ability to deceive. Two outcome groups were generated based on faked scores: participants who had successfully faked a police applicant profile "successful fakers" and those who did not successfully fake the police applicant profile "unsuccessful fakers". Successful faking was operationalised using Grieve and Mahar's (2010) model with target personality characteristics reported in Detrick and Chibnall's (2006) study.

2.3. Materials

2.3.1. Demographics
A brief demographic questionnaire was included.

2.3.2. Perceived ability to deceive (PATD)
PATD was assessed using the six item agree-disagree formatted version of the PATD scale presented by Schneider and Goffin (2012). Participants respond to three items assessing their self-rated ability to deceive (e.g. *I would be better than the average person at lying on my resume without getting caught*) using the anchors *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*. Three additional items assess perceived difficulty in deceiving (e.g. *How difficult would it be for you to overstate some of your work related experience in a job interview without getting caught*?) using the anchors *extremely difficult* and *extremely easy*. Cronbach's alpha was good in the current data ($\alpha = .86$).

2.3.3. Personality
Personality was measured using the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg, 1999), with 10 items assessing each of the Big Five domains of personality: neuroticism (e.g. *I get upset easily*); extraversion (e.g. *I am the life of the party*); openness (e.g. *I am quick to understand things*); agreeableness (e.g. *I make people feel at ease*); and conscientiousness (e.g. *I am exacting in my work*). Participants respond indicating the degree to which each statement describes themselves on a five option Likert scale using the anchors *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*. Our data indicated that this measure shows acceptable to good internal reliability: Cronbach's αs were .85 and .60 (neuroticism), .83 and .72 (extraversion), .67 and .74 (openness), .77 and .69 (agreeableness) and .83 and .84 (conscientiousness) for standard and faked administrations, respectively.

2.3.4. Manipulation check
A manipulation check was included in order to determine whether participants had understood and followed the instructions to fake the personality test. Participants were asked to respond to the open-ended statement *In one sentence, please describe what strategy you used to answer the previous questions.*

2.4. Procedure

To avoid self-selection of individuals who might be particularly confident in their ability to behave deceptively, participants were invited to participate in "Personality and emotional processing research" rather than deception research. After giving consent and providing demographic information, participants completed the personality questions and the PATD scale under standard instructions. Participants then completed a thinking style measure (Rational Experiential Inventory; Pacini & Epstein, 1999) to serve as a distractor. Following this, participants were given the personality measure again, this time with the following instructions:

Please take a moment to think about how you may present yourself if you were APPLYING FOR A JOB in the police force, and wish to appear as the IDEAL POLICE APPLICANT. Please imagine you have been given a conditional job offer for the police if you successfully complete this questionnaire. DO NOT RESPOND HONESTLY. Please do the best you can to present yourself as the ideal police applicant.

Participants were then presented with the manipulation check before being thanked for their time and given the opportunity to ask any questions.

3. Results

3.1. Manipulation check

Participants' responses to the manipulation check were screened to ensure that they had followed instructions to fake the second personality test as if an ideal police applicant. All participants indicated that they had followed instructions and were therefore retained. Illustrative answers included *I imagined being a senior police person and what they would want in an employee* and *I tried to answer with qualities I believe a copper should have i.e. high honesty/tolerance etc.*

3.2. Differences due to the nature of the sample

A Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons was applied and independent *t*-tests were conducted to determine whether scores on PATD or on any of the original or faked personality profiles differed based on gender or community member vs. student status. No significant differences were evident, with *p* values between .10 and .92. Further, all effect sizes were extremely small