



Do people when probed in employment interviews really fake more?

And why?

Carmen Hagemeister & Laura Venz

Dresden University of Technology
Assessment and Intervention



Overview

- **Theory / empirical results**
- **The decision-oriented interview**
- **Method**
- **Results**
- **Discussion**
 - Open questions
 - Consequences for interviewing
 - Possible solutions?



Theory

- **What we teach students in psychological assessment – not only for employment interviews**
 - Ask open questions
 - ◆ Detailed answers are one of the criteria that a story is reality based (“true”)
 - ◆ Criteria based statement analysis (Steller & Köhnken, 1989)
 - ◆ But:
 - ◆ Huge interindividual differences (Dahle, 1997)
 - After the open question, ask follow-up questions / probes
 - ◆ If persons know that follow-up questions will be asked they will not dare to fake



Contradicting empirical result

● Levashina and Campion (2007)

- 151 undergraduate students
- Mock employment interviews
- 2x2 between-subjects design
 - ◆ Question type
 - ◆ Past behavioural questions
 - ◆ Situational questions
 - Hypothesis: more faking when answering situational questions – found as expected
 - ◆ Follow-up questions
 - ◆ Without
 - ◆ With
 - Hypothesis: more faking without follow-up questions – NO!!!
 - More faking with follow-up questions in both interview types
 - **No explanation for the effect**



Question

- **Follow-up questions lead to more faking**
 - Check if this happens also in decision-oriented interviews (Westhoff & Kluck, 2009)
 - Show the underlying mechanism: Why?



Decision-oriented interview

- **Past behaviour (mainly)**
- **Partly structured**
- **The interviewees tell “like in a film” what has happened**
 - For each topic
 - ◆ Open question as an starting question
 - ◆ Pre-formulated follow-up questions addressing relevant aspects of the topic of the starting question
 - ◆ Asked if they have not yet been answered beforehand
 - ◆ Example from out interview guide
[Context of working]
 - ◆ Describe a task which you completed successfully.
 - What was the task?
 - What did you do?
 - What was the result?
 - What do you think: What contributed to your success?



Methods

● Participants

- 14 women, 16 men
- 22 to 40 years of age (mean 26.3)
- Had done practical work during studies or had been employed
- 9 after studies, 21 were still studying in Saxony (not psychology or economics)
- Not paid, received feedback on their behaviour in the mock employment interview

● 2 groups for the mock employment interview

- Without follow-up questions
- With follow-up question



Methods

● Procedure

- Job ad for a trainee position by e-mail
- Mock employment interview – videotaped
 - ◆ 19 starting questions in 6 fields
 - ◆ Always without probes
 - ◆ Occupational career
 - ◆ With or without probes depending on group
 - ◆ Practical work experience
 - ◆ Engagement, initiative, and willingness to learn
 - ◆ Teamwork skills, communication and contact
 - ◆ Cross-cultural competence
 - ◆ Entrepreneurship
- Interview Faking Behavior Scale (manipulation check)



Methods

- Interview on behaviour in mock employment interview
 - ◆ If the interviewee had faked or not and what had influenced the fact that the interviewee had faked or not
 - ◆ Questions (among others)
 - ◆ “Which effect did it have that I asked several follow-up questions (for the condition without: did not ask follow-up questions)?
 - ◆ Do you think it would have been different if I had (for the condition without: not) asked follow-up questions? If yes: How?”
 - ◆ Content analysis of the answers



Results

- Manipulation check:
Interview Faking Behavior Scale:
tendency for more faking with follow-up questions



Results - atmosphere

- Follow-up questions
 - ◆ create a positive natural atmosphere
 - ◆ are a task one has to master

 - ◆ allow to present oneself



Results – information about interview, content of good answer

- Follow-up questions
 - ◆ give information what to tell
 - ◆ give feedback if the interviewer is content
 - ◆ give feedback if the interviewer believes the answers

 - ◆ lead to more correct details



Results - Follow-up questions and faking

	Entries	Interviews
Follow-up question as trigger of faking	70	24
Follow-up question as reason to continue faking	57	19
Missing follow-up question inhibits faking	18	12
<i>Sum: Follow-up questions as a reason to fake</i>	145	27
Information which had been omitted is told after follow-up question	22	16
Truth after faking before, faking before not confessed	7	6
Missing follow-up question prevents faking from being discovered	7	6
Expectation of follow-up question as reason not to fake	18	13
Expectation of no follow-up question as reason to fake	15	11
<i>Sum: Follow-up questions as a reason to tell the truth / missing follow-up questions as a reason to fake</i>	69	27
Keeping to one's strategy, either faking or telling the truth	13	9



- More entries indicating that follow-up questions make faking more likely.
 - ◆ **After starting faking** in an employment interview the interviewees will not confess that they faked but continue to tell a plausible and consistent story
 - ◆ Follow-up questions give **more opportunities and ideas** for faking
- With or without follow-up questions
 - ◆ The interviewees try to present **themselves as fitting the requirements in consistent stories**



Open questions

- **Is it an effect of**
 - question type: follow-up questions vs. open starting questions
 - or
 - just more questions?



Open questions

● Do different probes help?

- ◆ “In your CV... but now you said...”
- ◆ “I cannot imagine how...”
- Potential advantage:
 - ◆ Relate to the context of what has been said
- Potential disadvantage:
 - ◆ All disadvantages of clinical assessment
 - ◆ Not prepared
 - ◆ How is the information used?
 - ◆ Differences between interviewers



Consequences for interviews

- **Never asking follow-up questions is a license for faking**

But

- **Follow-up questions do not guarantee that the interviewee tells the truth**
- **After the starting question the interviewee will stick to what she or he has said**



Possible solutions

- **Positioning of follow-up questions**
 - At the beginning of the interview

- **No follow-up questions, judgement afterwards**
 - Potential advantage:
 - ◆ Statistical judgement possible
 - Potential disadvantage:
 - ◆ Confounding content and eloquence
 - Ambivalent
 - ◆ Interviewee gets no feedback



Thank you for your attention!