



Self-Deception and Impression Management in Test Responses [★]

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Man is what he believes

Chekhov

Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than
are lies

Nietzsche

Introduction

In psychological assessment, we aim for the most accurate description of some cognitive or behavioral attribute. In assessment involving self-reports, this objective is invariably haunted by the possibility of misrepresentation. Certainly we would be sceptical of self-reports of intelligence, perhaps because of its universal desirability. Among the few qualities typically rated as even more desirable than intelligence is having a good personality. Thus it seems dangerous to ignore the possibility that at least some respondents systematically misrepresent their own personality.

The venerable literature on socially desirable responding (SDR), which peaked in the 1960s, attests to a fear on the part of many psychologists that SDR is a major threat to accurate assessment and should be controlled (e.g., Bernreuter, 1933; Edwards, 1957; Ellis, 1946; Jackson & Messick, 1962; Meehl & Hathaway, 1946). Such concerns have continued on into the 1980s (Kiecolt-Glaser & Murray, 1980; Linehan & Nielson, 1981; Rock, 1981; Sarason, Levine, Basham, & Sarason, 1983). Indeed, the 1974 revision of the *Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests* recommends attention to any "attempt to by the examinee to present a socially desirable conforming or false picture ...". An equally vocal school of assessment psychologists continues to deny that a correlation between social desirability and content scales indicates a need for control. These psychologists insist that such dimensions are much more substance than style (Block, 1965; Heilbrun, 1964; McCrae & Costa, 1983).

Without a clear reconciliation, the emphasis of personality assessors has shifted from the extremely polarized positions of the 1960s. The new look claims that respondents on self-reports are attempting to convey a certain self-concept or role to the assessor. For example, in Hogan's socioanalytic theory (Cheek & Hogan, 1984; Hogan, 1983; Mills & Hogan, 1978), responses to self-

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report inventories are said to be guided by underlying self-images which are unconscious and not situationally consistent. Although organized for a positive self-presentation, these self-images do not involve conscious dissimulation. Similar but less elaborate theories have been proposed by Wiggins (1966), Rogers (1974), Baumeister (1982), and Taylor, Carithers and Coyne (1976).

While this new emphasis has blunted the sometimes harsh battles over the social desirability issue, at least two problems central to personality assessment have been left in limbo (Strosahl, Linehan, & Chiles, 1984). The first concerns the relationship between socially desirable responding and adjustment. The second is whether social desirability should be routinely controlled in developing and administering self-report instruments.

In this paper, I will try to show how this controversy, as well as a number of other unsolved problems, may be resolved by a new emphasis on an old distinction. I will use the term *impression management* to refer to conscious dissimulation of test responses designed to create a favorable impression in some audience. In contrast, the term *self-deception* will refer to any positively biased response that the respondent actually believes to be true (these purposely vague definitions will be clarified later). Although researchers have alluded to this distinction over the years, its conceptual potential has been underestimated. I will try to show how the distinction yields surprisingly straightforward solutions to the lingering questions about adjustment and control.

Some History

Varieties of Terminology

In the beginning there was Freud. By touting the unconscious as a central component in psychic behavior, he provided the requisite feature for lying to oneself – a bicameral mind. Even the well-adjusted, socialized individual was assumed to inhibit and disguise both from himself and from others the driving forces of sexual and aggressive motivation. Such defense mechanisms were held to be largely unconscious in operation. Although Freud did not use the term explicitly, subsequent commentators on his work have cited the concept of self-deception as being a central mechanism in psychoanalytic theory. For example, Sackeim and Gur (1978) argue that self-deception is a necessary condition for repression. Mischel (1974) holds that all neurotic behavior is self-deceptive. Hilgard (1949) goes even further, to say that self-deception is a feature of all defense mechanisms.

Several philosophers have proposed definitions. Sartre (1943/1966) discusses a theory of self-deception using the French term «*mauvaise foi*» (literal) meaning “bad faith,” the term has been figuratively translated as “self-deception” (Kaufmann, 1956). Self-deception is said to be a free choice to persuade oneself that a conflict does not exist. Sartre’s term, like his concept,

has a moralistic tone. The self-deceiver's refusal to take responsibility for his actions is said to indicate an "inner disintegration at the heart of being" (p. 70). Kierkegaard's (1843/1959) concept is similarly moralistic: An individual may accept the responsibility of the self as an ethical agent of his behavior or deny the reality of responsibility as a self-deceiver. The fact that Sartre and Kierkegaard see self-deception as a moral issue places their theories beyond the scope of a purely psychological analysis.

More recently, Demos (1960) has defined self-deception in a straightforward way as simultaneously believing p and not- p . Individuals are said to be conscious of both but fail to notice that they have a conflict or be unable to notice it. Unfortunately, Demos is unclear about whether the not-noticing is motivated or not. Moreover his claim that both beliefs are conscious is problematic. Murphy (1975) has also argued for the importance of attention in self-deception.

Bach (1981) has provided the most psychological analysis in the philosophy literature. Rather than believing both p and not- p , the self-deceiver is said to believe only p . Since he desperately wants not- p to be true, he avoids thinking about p through processes of rationalization, jamming, and/or evasion. In a sense, not- p becomes true by default. Other, more restricted definitions are given by Fingarette (1969) and Sarbin (1981). For a detailed review see Lockard and Paulhus (in press).

The definition given by Sackeim and Gur (1978) is the most important for our purposes, because it is stated as a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for confirming that self-deception exists. The four criteria are (a) the individual holds two contradictory beliefs; (b) the two beliefs are held simultaneously; (c) the individual is not aware of holding one of the beliefs; and (d) the unawareness of one belief is motivated (p. 150).

This definition is clearly the most systematic and will be used as the working definition of self-deception in this chapter. To evaluate its utility in the context of test responses, we must review the empirical work.

Assessment of Self-Deception and Impression Management

A wide array of methods have been applied to the assessment of individual differences in SDR. For instance, several researchers developed instruments on a rational basis: they wrote questions that biased respondents should answer in a predictable way e.g., the Marlowe-Crowne scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), the Self- and Other-Deception Questionnaires (Sackeim & Gur, 1978), and the MMPI Lie scale (Hathaway & McKinley, 1943). Other instruments were developed by comparing the responses under "look-good" instructions to responses under standard conditions. The best-differentiating items were included in the scale. Among such instruments are Wiggins' Sd scale (Wiggins, 1959) and Ruch's Honesty scale (Ruch, 1941). A third approach involves selecting statements which have extremely high (or extremely low) desirability values when rated by judges, e.g., Edwards' SD

scale (Edwards, 1957). Finally, the most recent method involves comparing scores on a social desirability inventory under normal conditions with scores under bogus pipeline conditions (Millham & Kellogg, 1980).

Given the dramatically differing methodologies, it is not surprising that the resulting instruments often show minimal correlations with one another. We have known for some time that social desirability is multidimensional (Messick, 1960; Wiggins, 1966). It seems reasonable to suspect some systematic relation between the method of scale development and the nature of the resulting measure of desirable responding. For the most part, scale developers have not made a direct connection between their methodology and the construct they were attempting to measure. I will return to address this issue later. For the moment, I will try to partition the various SDR scales by the similarity of the concept to impression management or to self-deception.

Impression Management. The vast majority of instruments developed to assess individual differences in SDR seem to be aimed at impression management. The definitions typically included the term “lying,” – the conscious, purposeful deception of others. Perhaps the first such instrument was Ruch’s (1941) Honesty scale. Others include the MMPI Lie scale (Hathaway & McKinley, 1943), the Eysenck Personality Inventory Lie scale (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1964), the Faking scale for 16PF (Winder, O’Dell, & Karson, 1975), the Positive Malingering (Mp) scale (Cofer, Chance, & Judson, 1949), Cattell’s (1965) Unwilling to Admit Frailties scale (MI 219), Sackeim and Gur’s (1978) Other-Deception Questionnaire, Ling’s Lie scale (Amelang & Bartussek, 1970) and the Jackson-Messick Defensiveness scale (Kusyszyn & Jackson, 1968).

Discussions of such constructs focused on the respondent’s conscious objective of fooling the test administrator. The respondent’s behavior was assumed to be instrumental, aimed at winning a new job, or impressing an experimenter or teacher whose good graces were worthy of wooing. A smaller number of these instruments have been developed to measure faking bad or malingering (Winder et al., 1975).

Other measures were aimed at impression management as a goal in itself. The high scorer’s behavior is not instrumental to some other purpose but is directed at getting the target to like them as a nice, upright, healthy person. These include Crowne and Marlowe’s (1964) Need for Approval measure and Snyder’s (1974) Self-Monitoring scale.

Self-Deception. This set of measures have in common a different concept of SDR – a less conscious attempt to look good to oneself. The respondent’s motivation for the positive bias is assumed to be the protection of self-beliefs, including maintenance of self-esteem.

The first known attempt to measure self-deception was described by Frenkel-Brunswik in 1939. She compared the self-reports of 40 students in a graduate class with the ratings of four judges who knew them well. The self-deceptive tendency of each student was indexed in a variety of ways, e.g., the number

of contradictions between the subjects' and the judges' reports of everyday behavior. Evidence was reported for the following individual differences in self-deception: (a) Distortion of negative traits into positive ones; (b) omission of major traits in free descriptions; (c) justification of defects; and (d) minimizing the importance of defects. These tendencies were generally found to co-occur in the same individuals.

In her discussion, Frenkel-Brunswik makes a distinction between sincere and insincere self-reports. Unfortunately, her procedure of directly soliciting self-reports is likely to have encouraged some degree of impression management. Consequently, all the intriguing correlates of her self-deception measures are tainted by the confounding of self-deception with impression management.

About the same time, the developers of the MMPI were assembling the validity scales designed to pick up individuals with systematic tendencies to bias or contaminate responses. The authors felt that the Lie scale (Hathaway & McKinley, 1943) was effective in detecting extreme, conscious tendencies to fake good. This was later replaced by the K scale "to detect the more common and often unconscious varieties of defensiveness" (Meehl & Hathaway, 1946, p. 561). Interestingly, the authors warned that the instrument "was not assumed to be measuring anything which in itself is of psychiatric significance" (p. 544). The scale was developed empirically by selecting items which best distinguished between subjects diagnosed as abnormal but who had normal profiles and normal subjects. Subsequent studies of the K scale confirmed that it was distinct from the Lie scale but failed to clarify its conceptual meaning (e.g., Gynther & Brilliant, 1968; Heilbrun, 1964; Palmer, 1970).

Cattell and coworkers developed a series of motivation distortion scales (Cattell, 1965; Cattell, Horn, Sweney, & Radcliffe, 1964; Schanberger, 1967) to assess the biasing effects of motivation on self-reports. One scale is said to measure autism – the tendency to perceive reality as one wishes, in a way that makes one comfortable. The relation of this construct to self-deception becomes unclear in light of Cattell's (1965) comments that autism is a mostly conscious form of self-enhancement and that it is equivalent to an eccentric, nonpractical style of thinking (p. 367).

Jackson and Messick (e.g., Kusyszyn & Jackson, 1968) developed two measures of SDR: (a) The Defensiveness scale assessing deliberate dissimulation and (b) the Desirability scale assessing a bias in self-regard. Given their interest in these issues it is surprising that they have not reported any psychometric or validity studies on these scales.

The most explicit assault on measuring self-deception was directed by Sackeim and Gur (Gur & Sackeim, 1979; Sackeim, 1983; Sackeim & Gur, 1978, 1979). They developed the Self-Deception Questionnaire (SDQ) by writing 20 questions about threatening thoughts and feelings e.g., "Have you ever felt hatred toward any of your parents?" and "Have you ever wanted to rape or be raped by someone?." Most of the questions have a psychoanalytic flavor: The assumption is that everyone experiences such sexual and aggressive im-

pulses, but some people deny to themselves that such feelings have occurred. A critical feature of these questions is that no one but the respondent could possibly confirm the truth or falsehood of the response. The events in question are entirely intrapsychic and unavailable to outside observers. Thus, any bias observed under fully anonymous conditions must be honestly held by the respondent. In contrast, Sackeim and Gur's Other-Deception Questionnaire contained questions about undesirable *overt* behaviors which an individual would find difficult to deny to himself.

Another feature of the SDQ is worth noting. The respondent answers by marking a seven-point Likert scale anchored by "Not at all" (= 1) to "Very much so" (= 7). The scoring, however, is dichotomous. A point is awarded for self-deception only for extreme denial of the threatening thought, that is, a response of "1" or "2." Thus the SDQ score indexes a systematic *exaggeration* in denying threatening thoughts and feelings.

Most of the research on the SDQ has used the original 20 items – rationally devised but not statistically refined. Moreover, the original keying was negative for all items, thus confusing self-deception scores with acquiescence. A recent revision has rectified these problems with the SDQ and ODQ in a new instrument called the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (BIDR). Both scales now have a balanced key, and items with low part-whole correlations have been replaced (Paulhus, 1984a).

The construct validity of the SDQ has been supported in a series of experimental and correlational studies (Gur & Sackeim, 1979; Paulhus, 1982, 1984; Sackeim, 1983; Sackeim & Gur, 1978, 1979). For instance, Gur and Sackeim (1979) investigated subjects' ability to recognize their own voice on a tape recording containing several voices speaking the same phrase. On some trials subjects would deny hearing their voice although psychophysiological measures indicated that they were aware that the voice was theirs. These false denials were interpreted as instances of self-deception. The rate of false denials was positively related to scores on the SDQ. Thus experimentally induced instances of self-deception were predictable from scores on the self-report measure. In sum, the SDQ is clearly the most clearly conceptualized and well-validated measure of self-deception currently available.

The Empirical Relation of Self-Deception to Impression Management

The preceding partitioning of self-deception and impression management scales was based on the theoretical rationales provided by the various scale developers. That is, the scales discussed under the rubric "impression management" were conceived to measure similar constructs and likewise for those discussed under "self-deception." Factor analytic studies have supported this conceptual partitioning with some notable exceptions.

Only a handful of studies have explored the underlying structure of SDR measures (Edwards & Walsh, 1964; Liberty, Lunneborg, & Atkinson, 1964; Jackson & Messick, 1962; Wiggins, 1964). In one such study, Wiggins (1964)

uncovered one SDR factor (alpha) which included the Edwards SD scale and the MMPI K scale; a second SDR factor (gamma) included the MMPI Lie scale and the positive malingering scale. These results have two major implications. First, social desirability scales do not converge on one underlying construct but diverge into two factors which are consistent with the conceptual partitioning into self-deception and impression management presented above. The second implication is that Edwards' SD scale is associated with the self-deception cluster. Several other studies have replicated these findings (e.g., Edwards & Walsh, 1964; Jackson & Messick, 1962; Liberty et al., 1964; Paulhus, 1984a).

In 1965, Damarin and Messick reviewed this literature and spelled out a two-factor theory of SDR. This paper contained the first clear-cut argument for distinguishing available measures on the basis of conscious and unconscious biases in self-regard. The former was labeled "propagandistic bias," that is, a purposive, systematic distortion aimed at a specific audience. The second was labeled "autistic bias," the tendency to distort responses to be consistent with self-attitudes.

I would argue that most compelling evidence for the validity of the two-factor model comes from the three studies I recently reported (Paulhus, 1984a). Study 1 was an exploratory factor analysis of the traditional social desirability scales along with Sackeim and Gur's (1978) Self-Deception Questionnaire (SDQ) and Other-Deception Questionnaire (ODQ). The result are displayed

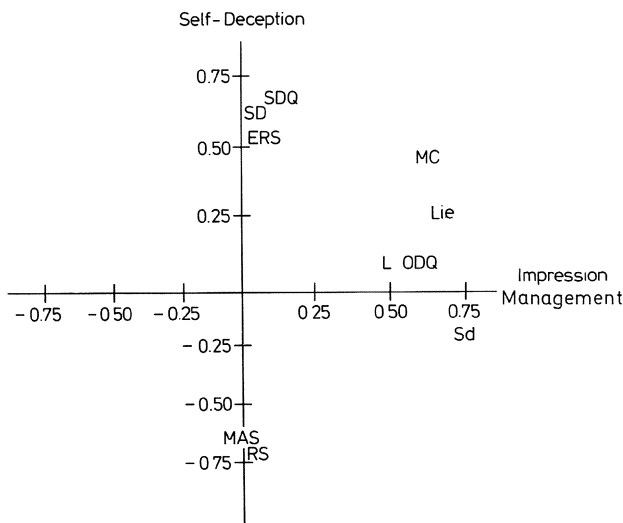


Fig. 1. Loadings of measures of desirable responding. *L* EPI Lie scale, *Lie* MMPI Lie scale, *SDQ* Self-Deception Questionnaire, *ODQ* Other-Deception Questionnaire, *MC* Marlowe-Crowne scale, *SD* Edwards social desirability scale, *Sd* Wiggins social desirability scale, *MAS* Taylor's Manifest Anxiety Scale, *RS* Byrne's Repression-Sensitization scale, *ERS* Block's Ego-Resiliency scale

in Fig. 1. Also included in Fig. 1 are several measures factor analyzed in a separate study (Paulhus, 1983).

As in previous studies, the Edwards SD scale, Block's ERS, and Byrne's R-S scale mark the alpha factor, and the Wiggins Sd scale marks the gamma factor. Moreover, the SDQ and ODQ loadings strongly support the two-factor model: The SDQ is the best marker of alpha, supporting its interpretation as self-deception. The ODQ is the best marker of gamma, supporting the interpretation as impression management. Note that the Marlowe-Crowne scale loads highly on both factors, indicating that its original designation as a lie scale was overly simplistic.

Study 2 in Paulhus (1984a) used confirmatory factor analyses to show the superiority of this two-factor model over a competing model proposed by Millham (1974). Study 3 provided experimental support for the interpretation of alpha and gamma as self-deception and impression management. Respondents completed the battery of desirability measures under one of two conditions, (a) *anonymous*, in a large group testing situation where no names were requested; or (b) *public*, in small groups where the experimenters requested names and indicated that they would check the answers. Results indicated that responses to measures loading high on the impression management factor were significantly more socially desirable in the public condition than in the anonymous condition. In comparison, the scales marking the self-deception factor did not change as much. Thus, impression management scales like ODQ and Sd are more responsive to situational changes in the demand for a positive self-presentation.

Some Resolutions

Self-Deception and Adjustment

We are now in a better position to address one of the questions lingering from the controversy about interpreting the major MMPI factors. MMPI researchers held that the first factor represented overall mental health or adjustment as evidenced by various external criteria of adjustment (Block, 1965; Heilbrun, 1964; Welsh, 1956). Critics emphasized the fact that the first factor was highly correlated with measures of SDR, especially the Edwards SD scale (Jackson & Messick, 1962; Edwards, 1957).

A rather simple postulate reconciles these positions: Well-adjusted individuals have a positively biased view of themselves. This bias will be manifested in tendencies to (a) ignore minor criticisms, (b) discount failures, (c) avoid negative thoughts, and (d) have a high expectancy of success in new endeavors. In contrast, the anxious or depressed individual accepts criticism and failures as being informative of his abilities and character. This comparison corresponds to Byrne's (1964) distinction between the repressor and the sensitizer. More recently, several writers have given arguments for the adaptive value of positive self-illusions (Lazarus, 1983; Sackeim, 1983; Taylor, 1983). This pos-

tulate is certainly disturbing, given the traditional view that insight into one's motivation and mistakes is the key to psychological health (e.g., Gough, 1965; Murphy, 1975; Rogers, 1959).

Nonetheless an array of empirical findings supports this postulate. A recent series of correlational studies certainly favors this view. The SDQ is highly negatively correlated with standard measures of psychopathology, including Beck's Depression Inventory (Roth & Ingram, 1985; Sackeim, 1983) and the Manifest Anxiety Scale (D. L. Paulhus, 1983, Correlates of self-deception, unpublished data). The SDQ is positively correlated with measures of adjustment including Rosenberg's Self-Esteem scale and Block's Ego-Resiliency Scale (D. L. Paulhus, 1983, Correlates of self-deception, unpublished data).

Further support derives from new findings in the clinical and social psychology literature. Consider first the provocative new work on "depressive realism": A growing body of research suggests that depressed individuals are *less* susceptible than nondepressed to a number of biases which distort reality in a self-serving fashion (e.g., Alloy & Abramson, 1979; Golin, Terrell, & Johnson, 1977; Nelson & Craighead, 1977). For example, Lewinsohn, Mischel, Chaplain, and Barton (1980) had subjects meet with a confederate who evaluated them. When asked to guess how well they had done, nondepressed subjects overestimated the interviewer's evaluation of them. Depressed subjects, however, were significantly more accurate in guessing the interviewers' ratings.

Other normal biases which are less evident in depressives include the false-consensus effect (Tabachnik, Crocker, & Alloy, 1983), the illusion of control (Alloy & Abramson, 1979; Golin et al., 1977), and defensive attributions (Feather, 1983; Kuiper, 1978). A wide range of other biases have been confirmed in normals, e.g., beneffectance, the hindsight bias, the optimism bias (Greenwald, 1980; Nisbett & Ross, 1980).

It is difficult to argue in light of all this evidence that insight is necessarily the sign of a healthy individual. On the contrary, a certain tendency toward self-deception may be a prerequisite to good adjustment. A resilient set of defenses would be of great advantage in surviving the slings and arrows of daily fortune. Clearly there are limits to the adaptive value of self-deception. If the self does not accommodate to major irrefutable threats, it risks a more serious psychological breakdown in the extreme. Moreover, there is evidence that individuals prone to self-deception also deny *physical* symptoms (Linden, Paulhus, & Dobson, in press). The ignoring of a temporary stomach ache may permit one to carry on with work or recreation. If, however, the stomach ache is the sign of a developing ulcer, ignoring it is dangerous because it precludes active coping behavior (Lazarus, 1983; Breznitz, 1983). When behavioral coping is fruitless, positive illusions can at least maintain the psychological health of the patient (Taylor, 1983).

If the reader is now convinced that self-deception is characteristic of the happy, well-adjusted person, the controversy over the MMPI alpha factor may be honorably settled. Self-deception contributes to ego-resiliency, self-esteem,

and self-confidence, while warding off anxiety and depression. In addition, because of an optimistic, positivistic bias, the self-deceiver tends to say good things about himself (sometimes exaggeratedly so) on social desirability scales like the Edwards SD scale. In sum, then, the MMPI alpha factor is tapping a positive self-bias which facilitates self-confidence and well-being.

Control of Socially Desirable Responding

The considerations in the previous section raise serious questions about the traditional recommendations for controlling social desirability in self-reports (see APA Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests). When conceived as a nuisance variable, socially desirable responding was an appropriate target for purging. When content and stylistic variance are one and the same, the bathwater is jettisoned only at risk to the baby. Indeed, several studies have shown that, once SDR has been controlled with the Edwards or Marlowe-Crowne scales, measures related to the alpha factor (e.g., ego-resiliency, anxiety) lose predictive power (Borkenau & Amelang, 1985; Edwards, 1970; McCrae & Costa, 1983). Since adjustment is confounded with the self-deception component of SDR, the latter should never be controlled in assessments of adjustment e.g., self-esteem, ego-resiliency, anxiety, and depression.

The tendency toward an honestly held positive self-bias may underlie other personality constructs besides adjustment. For example, measures of perceived control (Paulhus, 1983; Rotter, 1966) concern the expectancy of control over one's reinforcements. Those scoring as Internals relative to Externals have an over-optimistic expectancy of success (e.g., Phares & Lamiell, 1974), show more dissonance reduction (McCann, Zanna, & Higgins, 1980), and forget negative information (Phares et al., 1968). Other constructs entailing a positive bias include social dominance (Wiggins, 1979), hopelessness (Beck et al., 1974), and achievement motivation (Weiner, 1978). The control of self-deception in measuring any of these constructs will be hazardous to predictive validity.

On the other hand, impression management remains a contaminant in interpreting self-reports. The problem does not arise so much in the anonymous group-test situations typical in scale development, but in typical applications in laboratory studies, clinical settings, and personnel selection, where anonymity is impossible (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1984): when self-report inventories are administered, an individual who consciously fakes good will score high on those content measures with clear-cut desirability implications. The same individual should also score high on an accompanying IM scale. One could simply disregard protocols where the IM score exceeded a certain level (Dahlstrom & Welsh, 1960). More sophisticated approaches will be discussed in the next section.

Specific Techniques. In an earlier paper I discussed three categories of techniques for controlling SDR (Paulhus, 1981). Rational techniques are features

built into a self-report instrument to preclude desirable responding, e.g., forced choice between options balanced on desirability. Covariate techniques involve statistically correcting an observed relation by partialing out the variance due to SDR e.g., partial correlation, regression. Factor analytic controls involve the removal of SDR variance from an item correlation matrix before the construction of content scales, e.g., target rotation, factor deletion. All these techniques now require a second look, given the measurable separation of self-deception and impression management.

The covariate and factor techniques can be dealt with in straightforward fashion. If one wished to correct for both types of SDR, one would control the variance due to each variable. In general, this would require inclusion of both self-deception and impression management scales in the inventory.

The rational techniques raise more abstruse problems. Consider the technique of equating options for social desirability in a forced-choice format. This task should be difficult to the extent that the content dimension is intrinsically confounded with SDR. Attempting to equate options on an anxiety scale, for instance, would be difficult and ultimately fruitless. Indeed, one risks creating strange options which are unbalanced on a host of unknown variables (Meehl, 1970). In general, the forced-choice format is contraindicated for control of self-deception.

The technique is still useful for controlling impression management. Recall that items asking about overt behaviors were minimally subject to self-deception. Such behavioral reports would still be subject to impression management unless the options were equated for desirability.

Another rational technique involves the use of statements with neutral desirability. If neither response is more socially desirable than the other, it is assumed the respondent will focus on the item content. Again, it is difficult to write neutral items to tap adjustment, although Block (1965) had some success. Such neutral items would be useful in controlling self-deception, because the latter is said to be elicited only by extreme threats. In contrast, items with extremely high or low desirability would provoke such a threat. Impression management may also be usefully controlled by asking about behaviors with neutral desirability value.

Finally, it bears repeating that self-deception is controlled by asking only about overt behaviors. A corollary is that constructs entailing self-deception will be difficult to assess with items about overt behavior.

New Directions

A Closer Look at Self-Deception

The time has come to consider a number of questions surrounding the claim that self-deception is being tapped by such measures as the SDQ and SD scales. First, how do we know that the socially desirable reports of high scorers (alphas) are not in fact accurate accounts of their good character? After all,

there is substantial evidence that they are popular, well-adjusted people (Block, 1965; Heilbrun, 1964).

I agree that alphas are likely to be accurate in reporting a lack of anxiety and unhappy thoughts as probed by many items on the SD and R-S (Repression-Sensitization) scales. Furthermore, it seems reasonable that the self-confidence and self-liking addressed by other items should follow from lack of anxiety. What is harder to accept is the type of claim alphas make on the SDQ. They deny ever having sexual fantasies or hateful thoughts about their parents, enjoying their bowel movements, or feeling angry or guilty. (Recall that responses are counted as self-deceptive only if the denial is extreme.) Behavioral measures also corroborate the unrealistic degree of their positive bias. High scorers on the SDQ have been shown to deny hearing their own voice when physiological measures indicate they have heard it (Gur & Sackeim, 1979). They also exhibit the hindsight bias more than low scorers (Paulhus, 1983: Correlates of self-deception, unpublished data). Finally, one notable group scoring very low on the SDQ is depressives (Roth & Ingram, 1985; Sackeim & Gur, 1979). As documented earlier, depressives fail to show a variety of biases evident in nondepressives. In sum, my reading of the literature is that alphas are positively biased to such a degree that they often distort reality.

Nonetheless, a demonstration that alphas are unrealistically biased is not equivalent to demonstrating that they are deceiving themselves. It is equivalent if we define self-deception in the most general sense as an honest belief in a false characterization of the self. Hence we can argue that alphas are in a self-deceived *state* while withholding judgment on its origin. However, it may be preferable to restrict the term self-deception to the motivated unawareness of one of two conflicting cognitions. This usage is compatible with that of most concerned writers (Demos, 1960; Fingarette, 1969; Sackeim & Gur, 1978). As a complement, I will use the term *auto-illusion* to represent self-biases which result from cognitive or informational biases. Nisbett and Ross (1980) have detailed a number of cognitive biases involving nonmotivational mechanisms of information processing. Although nonmotivational, these biases result in a favorable self-image. Informational biases derive from social restrictions on availability of information. For instance, people avoid bearing bad news, including criticism, to others (Tesser & Rosen, 1974). This social convention should induce a biased self-view in most people.

The critical question now becomes whether alphas are characterized by self-deception or auto-illusions (or both). Self-deception in the pure sense has only been demonstrated in two studies (Gur & Sackeim, 1979; Sackeim, 1983). As detailed earlier, Gur and Sackeim asked subjects to pick out their own voices from a tape of several students reciting the same phrase. Psychophysiological records showed a relatively reliable response whenever the subject's own voice came on. At an oral level, however, subjects often denied hearing their voice. The authors considered the GSR (galvanic skin response) and oral reports to be indicators of separate cognitions which were sometimes in dis-

agreement. Evidence that this separation of cognitions was motivated followed from an additional manipulation. Subjects who had just undergone a failure experience showed a higher rate of discrepancies (e.g., false denials) than those experiencing success. A similar study is reported by Sackeim (1983). Perhaps most importantly, individuals scoring high on the SDQ exhibited a higher rate of false denials.

Few would deny that this study is a creative and sophisticated investigation of a well-defined phenomenon. Nonetheless, its value in demonstrating self-deception is restricted in at least one important sense – the time-frame is rather short. The contradictory cognitions were simultaneously held for only the briefest time. Only while the individual's voice was being played (a 5-s duration) could the two conflicting cognitions be simultaneously registered. There is no suggestion of any long-term storage of conflicting cognitions. This short duration is not consistent with the anecdotal examples of self-deception typically cited, e.g., a child with a love/hate attitude toward a parent. Admittedly, the study of such chronic cases would remove the research from the controlled conditions of the laboratory into the realm of case studies with questionable scientific and ethical status. I shall dub such cases *chronic* self-deception, in contrast to the *acute* instance demonstrated by Sackeim and Gur (cf. Paulhus, 1984 b). Perhaps the SDQ taps a tendency toward acute rather than chronic self-deception, which may involve highly idiosyncratic concerns.

The notion of acute self-deception bears some resemblance to Byrne's (1964) construct of repressive style. The repressor is said to habitually avoid attending to negative thoughts and threatening information. The R-S scale (which correlates .50 with the SDQ) has an extensive research literature supporting its conception as a cognitive style. In contrast, the emphasis in self-deception is on its motivational basis. Virtually any behavior might be called upon to serve the needs of self-deception (Sackeim, 1983). Nonetheless, repressive style and acute self-deception are similar in providing mechanisms which respond to threat and induce a state of positive self-bias including freedom from anxiety. Such a bias would then be autonomous, being maintained by cognitive inertia until disconfirmed (McGuire, 1960; Ross, 1977; Tesser & Paulhus, 1976).

We can now return to the question of whether the alpha factor measures are tapping self-deception, auto-illusions, or simply the resulting sense of well-being. The last seems true of Edwards's SD, Byrne's R-S, and the anxiety scales. Their item content generally concerns the psychological comfort of being positively biased. There is no provocation of self-deception in responding to "I am happy most of the time" or "My hands and feet are usually warm enough." On the SDQ, however, the items are designed to elicit defensiveness. Consider the item, "Have you ever enjoyed your bowel movements?" The question is threatening even if the respondent had never given it much thought before (Butcher & Tellegen, 1966). Presumably few people could accurately deny they had ever enjoyed a bowel movement. Nonetheless, admitting it seems shameful, as if anything associated with feces could not honorably be

considered pleasurable. Some respondents giving false denials may have considered the possibility before and now glibly report their previous negative conclusion as part of a chronic self-deception. Those who had not previously considered it would still find the idea offensive and deal with it using some self-defensive technique. Some form of self-deception is implicated, given that the truth is “yes” and the honest response is “no.”

Given the high intercorrelations among the three types of measures, the alpha factor seems to simultaneously tap (a) adjustment, (b) auto-illusions, and (c) self-deception. We are left with an intriguing question that I will not try to answer here: Why should individuals with self-deceptive tendencies also tend to exhibit auto-illusions?

A Closer Look at Impression Management

Impression management is far from a unified concept. In this section I will describe three distinct usages of this appellation and consider the implications for assessment. Briefly the three usages are: (a) impression management as strategic simulation (e.g., Edwards, 1970; Jones & Pittman, 1982); (b) impression management as a motive (e.g., Crowne & Marlowe, 1964); and (c) impression management as a skill (e.g., Collins, Paulhus, & Graziano, 1983; Danheiser & Paulhus, 1981; Snyder, 1974).

Among the writers who see impression management as strategic, the most extreme group holds that each situation has a uniquely situated identity which is the culturally acknowledged best image to portray that situation (Alexander & Knight, 1971). Jones and Pittman (1982) have narrowed a taxonomy of those who use impression management by distinguishing five major types: (a) The ingratiation, who seeks to appear likable; (b) the intimidator, who seeks to appear threatening; (c) the self-promoter, who seeks to appear competent; (d) the supplicant, who seeks to appear helpless; and (e) the exemplifier, who seeks to appear virtuous. While these types may not be exhaustive, they do cover the four poles of the interpersonal circumplex which is said to circumscribe the domain of interpersonal behavior (Leary, 1957; Wiggins, 1979). The ingratiation and the intimidator are impression managing on the nurturance-hostility dimension; the self-promoter and the supplicant are impression managing on the dominance-submission dimension.

Jones and Pittman see all five types of impression management as *strategic*. The actor engages the role for its instrumental value in increasing his power over a particular target. Clearly impression management covers far more ground. To begin with, it is necessary to distinguish “acquisitive” self-presentation from “defensive” self-presentation (Arkin, 1981; Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). In fact, such impression management behaviors are often engaged in as ends in themselves, i.e., motives. The ingratiation sometimes wants nothing more than the affection of his target: such approval motivation has been described in considerable detail by Crowne and Marlowe (1964) and more recently by Millham and Jacobson (1978). The self-promoter is often motivated

to achieve respect and status among his peers, not by the opportunities for instrumental gain. Similarly, intimidation, supplication, and exemplification have intrinsic motivational value in some of the people some of the time. For a detailed review of the range of motives represented in the circumplex see Wiggins and Broughton (in press).

The distinction between impression management as strategic or motivational has direct implications for assessment. The gamma factor of SDR involves measures which were developed in terms of strategic dissimulation. High scorers were considered to be purposely faking good to win a job, impress an experimenter, etc. By this view, the same respondents would presumably fake bad if the situation called for it (Meehl & Hathaway, 1946, p. 539; cf. Winder et al., 1975). In fact, gammas would presumably tend to fake any profile which they perceive to maximize their strategic outcomes in that specific context. This description is reminiscent of the Machiavellian personality (Christie & Geis, 1979), particularly the Tactics factor. There should be a high correlation between Mach Tactics and lie scales in situations where looking good is advantageous. As far as I know, these propositions remain untested.

Let us now consider the measurement of impression management as a motive. Although the gamma factor measures were typically developed as lie scales, there is some evidence that they are tapping a motivation to be liked. Indeed, the Marlowe-Crowne scale was originally conceived as a lie scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). Detailed research on the behavior of high (as opposed to low) scorers indicated a consistent personality syndrome – a strong need for approval (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964). However, this syndrome may result from the unique conjoint nature of the Marlowe-Crowne scale: it combines impression management and self-deception (Paulhus, 1984a). Thus, need for approval may be an emergent personality *type* rather than a simple trait. That is, the unique character of this individual may emerge from a willingness to fool others combined with lack of self-insight.

Nonetheless, no known research has examined the personality of individuals scoring high on gamma factor scales. If these scales, like the Marlowe-Crowne scale, are tapping approval motivation rather than dissimulation, we should see patterns of conformity and approval-seeking even where there is no instrumental advantage to such behavior.

As noted earlier, several other common types of impression management might be enacted for their intrinsic benefits rather than instrumental to some external payoff. Thus, the self-promoter may gain self-esteem by selling himself to others. For instance, there is evidence that a positive self-presentation tends to become internalized if no contrary information is available (Gergen, 1965; Jones, Gergen, & Davis, 1962; Jones & Wortman, 1973). Similarly, the portrayal of hostility and submission may be intrinsically rewarding to some people some of the time.

Finally, let us consider impression management as a skill. Social skills as a whole cover a wide variety of abilities, styles, and temperament, along with moderating situations and attributes, e.g., sex, age, attractiveness (Hogan &

Briggs, 1983). Snyder (1974) has emphasized the importance of one trait which he calls self-monitoring. As originally defined, the high self-monitor is one "who out of a concern for social appropriateness, is particularly sensitive to the expression and self-presentation of others in social situations and uses these cues as guidelines for monitoring his own self-presentation" (p. 528). Although a motivation is implied in "concern for social appropriateness," Snyder's theoretical emphasis and research has been on the ability component. Factor analyses have confirmed that social skill is one component of the measure (Briggs, Cheek, & Buss, 1980). There is now evidence that self-monitors can communicate emotions accurately on command (Snyder, 1974), can control their behavior to impress others (Arkin, Gabrenya, Appelman, & Cochrane, 1979; Shaffer, Smith, & Tomarelli, 1983), can detect deception in others (Krauss, Geller, & Olson, 1976), detect ingratiation in others (Jones & Baumeister, 1976), and generally make accurate predictions about their social environment (Berscheid, Graziano, Monson, & Dermer, 1976).

It is important to note that the self-monitoring scale shows little correlation with the Marlowe-Crowne scale measuring need for approval (Danheiser & Paulhus, 1981; Snyder, 1974). Thus skill and motivation in impression management appear to be independent. This independence has provoked some recent research examining the behavior of the various combinations of high and low skill and motivation. For instance, Danheiser and Paulhus (1981) found that the most popular members of a continuing group were those high in skill and high in motivation. The least popular were those high in motivation but low in skill. Like the proverbial schlemiel, they wanted friends desperately but their inept overtures offended others. This "schlemiel effect" was replicated in a subsequent laboratory study (Collins, Paulhus, & Graziano, 1983).

This research illustrates the value of measuring different levels of impression management separately. By studying such combinations of skill, motivation and tactics, we will surely come closer to understanding the complexities of social interactions. Such understanding will receive a significant boost when the nature of the gamma factor is clarified.

Conclusions

The thrust of this chapter has been to highlight the distinction between self-deception and impression management. I began by tracing the distinction to a few seminal papers in the philosophical and psychological literature. The application of this distinction to the old social desirability controversy provided some rather elegant resolutions. I concluded that the major dimension of adjustment (the first factor of the MMPI) is intrinsically intertwined with a self-deceptive bias in self-regard. Several other central dimensions of personality also involve a component of self-deception. Consequently, any attempt to control self-deception in measuring these constructs will undermine predictive power. On the other hand, impression management is a contaminating factor and should generally be controlled during both the development and the administration of tests.

A detailed analysis of self-deception indicated a need to distinguish self-deception (the motivated unawareness of one of two conflicting cognitions) from auto-illusions (a self-bias resulting from cognitive or informational biases). In addition, I made a distinction between chronic self-deception (where the conflicting cognitions remain available in memory over an extended period) and acute self-deception, where the conflicting cognitions are simultaneously available only for a brief period.

Finally, an in-depth analysis indicated the potential for assessment of impression management as a tactic, as a motive, and as a skill. The joint characterization on more than one of these components has vast potential for improving prediction.

My hope is that this paper has answered some lingering questions and framed some new questions in a testable fashion. It is now clear that the distinction between self-deception and impression management offers theoretical and methodological benefits. Self-deception, in particular, appears to play a theoretical role in a number of personality constructs. The ability to measure self-deception and impression management separately also has important methodological benefits. These center on improved predictive power based on a clearer understanding of when and how to control socially desirable responding.

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