Deception as Competence: The Effect of Occupational Stereotypes on the Perception and Proliferation of Deception

Brian C. Gunia[a] & Emma E. Levine[b]

[a]Johns Hopkins University, Carey Business School

[b]University of Chicago Booth School of Business

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Address correspondence to Brian C. Gunia, Johns Hopkins Carey Business School, 100 International Drive, Baltimore, MD 21202. Email: brian.gunia@jhu.edu, Phone: 410-234-9423.

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Abstract

Deception remains prevalent despite its widespread vilification. The current research examines why. Integrating theories of selling, stereotypes, and negotiation—and challenging much research and rhetoric on deception—we document that perceivers do not always disapprove of deceivers. Instead, they conclude that deceivers will be competent in certain occupations: those in which a selling orientation (SO) is stereotypically seen as integral to the job. We first introduce SO as an occupational stereotype and distinguish between occupations stereotyped as high vs. low in SO (HISO vs. LISO). We then demonstrate (across six studies; two preregistered; total N =1584) that deception is perceived to signal a person's ability to engage in SO, and thus their competence in HISO occupations. Finally, we show that this may lead to the hiring of deceptive individuals. These results identify occupations as a moderator of deception-related reactions, helping to explain persistent deception and highlight possible interventions.

Key words: deception, occupations, competence, selling orientation, stereotypes

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Sell:
1. Deliberate deception: cheat, hoax, imposition…
--Definition #4, Merriam-Webster's Third New International Unabridged Dictionary.

Self-interested deception, defined as explicitly transmitting information that intentionally misleads others for the purpose of personal gain (Boles et al., 2000; Gino & Shea, 2012; Levine & Schweitzer, 2015), emerges frequently in organizational settings (Gneezy, 2005). For example, scholars have shown that the majority of negotiators deceive (Aquino, 1998) and argued that, "One of the enduring truths about human beings is that we lie" (Adler, 2007: 69). Similarly, practitioner-oriented reports have indicated that 39% of people around the world consider corrupt and deceptive practices widespread in their own countries (EY Global Fraud Survey, 2016) and have characterized the many documented cases of fraud—2,690 over 21 months—as "only a tiny fraction of the frauds committed against organizations worldwide during that time" (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 2018: 9).

Despite the prevalence of self-interested deception (hereafter just "deception") and related forms of unethical behavior, however, psychological research consistently suggests that perceivers react negatively to deceivers. For example, deception elicits anger, disliking, punishment, and perceptions of low trustworthiness (e.g., Boles, Croson, & Murnighan, 2000; Croson, Boles, & Murnighan, 2003; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, & Dirks, 2004; Kim, Dirks, & Cooper, 2009; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Schweitzer & Croson, 1999; Schweitzer, Hershey, & Bradlow, 2006; Tyler, Feldman, & Reicher, 2006). Importantly, recent research also suggests that deception and other forms of unethical behavior signal incompetence (Stellar & Willer, 2018)—a

finding broadly consistent with meta-analytic results suggesting that signals of competence and integrity are positively correlated (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007).

If deception elicits such a wide array of negative reactions, and especially the perception of incompetence, why do we continue to see so much of it in real organizations? An economic explanation would suggest that the benefits outweigh the costs—that deceivers, on average, gain more than they lose (Gneezy, 2005). We offer a complementary and more psychological explanation—that perceivers do not entirely disapprove of deceivers. Instead, perceivers conclude that deceivers will be *competent* in particular occupations. Why might this happen? In which occupations? How might the perception that deception is competent contribute to the proliferation of deception? Our research seeks to answer these questions.

To answer the first two questions, we integrate research on selling (e.g., Saxe & Weitz, 1982) and occupational stereotypes (e.g., Babin, Boles, & Darden, 1995) to propose that people stereotype occupations as relatively high vs. low in selling orientation (HISO vs. LISO). That is, they stereotypically believe that selling orientation (SO)—or *the use of high-pressure persuasion tactics to elicit an immediate, self-interested economic transaction*—represents a more integral part of the job in some occupations than others. Based on the finding that individuals conflate deception with self-interested persuasion in negotiation (e.g., Schweitzer, DeChurch, & Gibson, 2005), we predict that people will conflate deception with SO more broadly. Thus, deception will signal an individual's ability to engage in SO, which will signal their competence in occupations that stereotypically require SO (i.e., HISO occupations).

How might the perception that deception signals competence contribute to the proliferation of deception? We consider one possibility: that perceivers will then select (i.e., hire) deceptive individuals into HISO occupations at elevated rates (Schneider, 1987). Evidence for

this possibility may help to explain why deception proliferates in certain occupations in the real world. Six studies support our predictions, suggesting that deception systematically signals competence in and contributes to people's selection into HISO occupations.

We believe that this research makes important theoretical contributions. First, by demonstrating occupational variation in perceptions of deception, it complements the implicit assumption and frequent finding that deception is evaluated negatively (e.g., Aquino & Reed, 2002, Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, Weaver, & Reynolds, 2006, but see Levine & Schweitzer, 2014, 2015). In particular, we identify a boundary condition of the link between deception and incompetence (Stellar & Willer, 2018), suggesting that this relationship may reverse in HISO occupations. Thus, this work responds to the call for more and more nuanced research on the consequences of dishonesty (e.g., Wiltermuth, Newman, & Raj, 2015).

Additionally, by introducing the idea that SO can function as an occupational stereotype and demonstrating the potentially insidious effects of this stereotype, the current research deepens our understanding of deception's persistence. In particular, it helps to explain the continued prevalence of deception in numerous, seemingly diverse occupations. Thus, we go beyond prior work that conceptualizes SO as restricted to salespeople—as well as work conceptualizing deception as a product of either the banking occupation in particular (Cohn, Fehr, & Marechal, 2014) or business careers in general (e.g., Kennedy & Kray, 2014). Instead, our results suggest that deception may persist in any occupation stereotyped as HISO.

Finally, our research complements recent behavioral ethics work conceptualizing unethical behavior as a consequence of situational pressures and cognitive biases (e.g., Bazerman & Tenbrunsel, 2011; Chugh, Bazerman, & Banaji, 2005; Kern, & Chugh, 2009; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 2004; Zhong, 2011). Without disputing these important conclusions, our focus on

broadly-held occupational stereotypes, contributing to potentially broad patterns of selection, highlights several more macro-level processes that may create the micro-level conditions conducive to deception (Coleman, 1990). Beyond these theoretical implications, we believe that the findings hold some important practical implications, particularly by suggesting that organizations could reduce the hiring of deceptive individuals by deemphasizing the HISO aspects of jobs. In sum, we believe that this research holds new and important implications, both theoretical and practical, about deception-related beliefs and behavior.

Selling Orientation

Occupations have been defined as "traditionally recognized professions…as well as other career tracks that are similarly characterized by specific knowledge and well-defined standards of behavior" (Leavitt et al., 2012: 1318). Different occupations involve differing knowledge and standards of behavior, in turn, because their members engage in different types of activities. Here, we focus on one type of activity common across many occupations: selling. Yet, we suggest that a particular mode of selling—selling orientation (SO)—is stereotypically seen as more integral to the job in certain occupations than others, and that this stereotype directly influences perceptions of deceivers. Specifically, we suggest that perceivers will see deceivers as likely to be competent in occupations stereotyped as high in SO (HISO).

Selling Orientation in Sales

The construct of SO comes from the marketing literature, which has studied salespeople and identified SO and customer orientation (CO) as two prototypical approaches to selling (e.g., Saxe & Weitz, 1982; also see Franke & Park, 2006; Michaels & Day, 1985; Thomas, Soutar, &

Ryan, 2001).[1] Grounded in basic theories of human motivation (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1970a), CO and SO reflect different degrees of focus on a person's own (i.e., the salesperson's) vs. other people's (i.e., customers') outcomes.

CO involves the use of problem-solving behaviors to uncover and maximize the satisfaction of true customer needs (e.g., Frank & Parke, 2006; Michaels & Day, 1985; Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Thomas et al., 2001). Salespeople following this approach seek to maximize "long-term customer satisfaction rather than short-term sales" (Franke & Park, 2006: 693). Since CO could hamper sellers' short-term sales but help their long-term sales, it reflects a high focus on both self and others (Saxe & Weitz, 1982). Although CO does not preclude self-interested motives, it emphasizes selling tactics that are helpful and honest rather than self-interested or deceptive. For example, CO involves "[helping] customers achieve their goals" and "[answering] customers' questions about products as correctly as I can" (Saxe & Weitz, 1982: 345).

SO, in contrast, involves the use of high-pressure persuasion tactics to elicit an immediate, self-interested sale (Blake & Mouton, 1970b; Frank & Parke, 2006, Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Thomas et al., 2001). This approach reflects a high focus on the salesperson's own outcomes and a low focus on customers' outcomes (Saxe & Weitz, 1982), and its two separate but necessary dimensions—persuasion and self-interest—make it a multidimensional construct (Edwards, 2001). Importantly, SO emphasizes selling tactics that are self-interested but not necessarily deceptive. The original 12-item SO scale (Saxe & Weitz, 1982: 346), for example,

[1] The original work on these two approaches (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) implies that SO and CO represent opposite ends of a scale, but it also shows that they load onto two orthogonal factors, suggesting that they may represent different dimensions. We adopt the latter interpretation. Additionally, although we recognize that recent work has used the term "selling orientation" to connote "the motivational inclination to attract another person during an interpersonal meeting" (Marr & Cable, 2014; p. 624), we anchor our definition in the work cited above.

focuses on behaviors like "[trying] to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer" and "[beginning] the sales talk for a product before exploring a customer's needs with him." Indeed, only one of the scale items likely meets the above definition of deception ("It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer"). This focus on self-interest rather than deception probably reflects the many self-interested but non-deceptive persuasion tools at sellers' disposal (Mattson, 2009). For example, real salespeople can adopt any of Cialdini's (1993) six persuasion techniques (scarcity, liking, social proof, etc.), none of which inherently involves deception, as well as many other tactics (e.g., using complicated jargon, criticizing the buyer's alternatives, vividly describing a product's benefits). In sum, while SO does not entirely preclude deception, it emphasizes self-interested persuasion rather than deception.

Notwithstanding the two possible approaches to selling (SO and CO) and evidence that CO is somewhat more effective (Bateman & Valentine, 2015; Franke & Park, 2006; Goff, Boles, Bellenger, & Stojack, 1997), the selling literature clearly indicates that salespeople are stereotypically perceived to rely on SO more than CO. That is, when asked to consider what real salespeople do, perceivers consistently indicate that sellers engage in behaviors indicative of SO rather than CO, i.e., that SO represents the more integral part of the job (e.g., Adkins & Swan, 1982; Babin et al., 1995; DeFries, 2017; McMurray 1961; Pink, 2013; Thompson, 1972). Indeed, Dan Pink (2013) recently published an entire book on this idea, showing that individuals characterize salespeople as "pushy" and "manipulative" even though these words represent a highly incomplete view of selling. This is but one of many examples: Numerous popular articles have made the same point (e.g., DeFries, 2017), as have decades of surveys and empirical research. A survey with nearly 1000 respondents, for example, revealed people's widespread belief that: "selling benefits only the seller," and "one must be arrogant and overbearing to

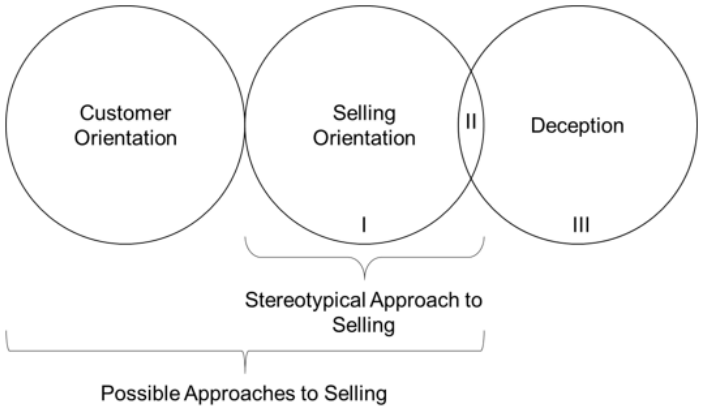
succeed in selling" (*Sales Management*, 1962; reported in Thompson, 1972). Similarly, empirical investigations have repeatedly demonstrated the link between selling (e.g., Adkins & Swan, 1982)—especially car selling (Babin et al., 1995)—and self-interested persuasive behaviors.

Since the view that selling primarily involves SO omits the possibility of CO and mischaracterizes the behavior of many real salespeople (Pink, 2013; Mattson, 2009), it represents a stereotype. In general, stereotypes are "widely held assumptions about certain types of people that are represented cognitively as extensive, well-organized categories or schemata" (Andersen, Klatzky, & Murray, 1990: 192). Though stereotypes need not present an accurate picture of a group, they are relatively consistent across perceivers, perhaps because they contain a "kernel of truth" (Bodenhausen, 1990). For example, the stereotypical association between selling and SO may reflect the pushy car dealer that many people occasionally encounter (Babin et al., 1995).

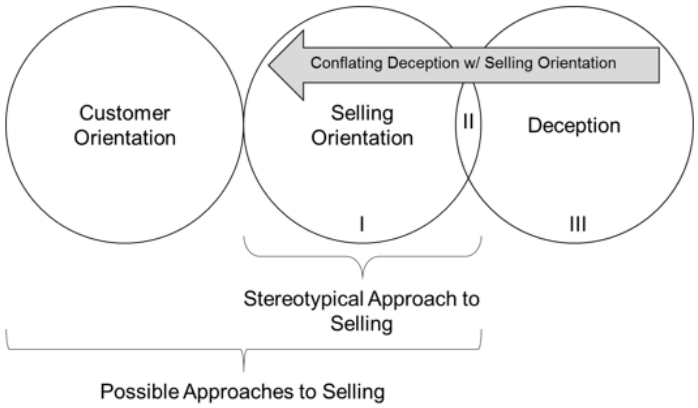
Figure 1 (Panel A) illustrates the possible and stereotypical approaches to selling as well as their relationship with deception. SO and CO are depicted as alternative, mutually-exclusive approaches to selling; stereotypically, however, selling involves SO alone. Within SO, Section I represents the many selling tactics that involve self-interested persuasion but not deception, and Section II represents selling tactics involving deceptive, self-interested persuasion. Section III represents the many forms of deception that are not intended as a selling tactic (e.g., that are intended to undermine someone else, evade a tough question, exploit a loophole, etc.).

Figure 1. Customer Orientation (CO), Selling Orientation (SO), and Deception

Panel A. Relationship between constructs



Panel B. *Perceived* relationship between constructs



Selling Orientation across Occupations

Thus far, research has treated SO as a stereotypical image of salespeople. But is the stereotype really confined to salespeople—is salesperson really the only occupation in which SO is stereotypically seen as integral to the job? We break new ground by suggesting that SO may apply to numerous occupations—that perceivers may see SO as an integral component of jobs other than sales. Fundamentally, the idea that SO represents a pervasive stereotype builds from the fact that selling itself is pervasive across occupations (Pink, 2013). That is, almost any job involves some degree of selling. For example, advertisers, marketers, and consultants all sell products; investment bankers, doctors, and accountants all sell services; even teachers sell ideas.

Additional support for the generality of SO comes from the negotiation literature, which suggests that the behaviors and motivations associated with SO arise in many selling contexts. In particular, negotiation research has long documented the widespread use of distributive negotiation strategies (e.g., Weingart, Thompson, Bazerman, & Carroll, 1990), which fundamentally involve persuading a counterpart to accept a self-interested offer (Gunia, Brett, Nandkeolyar, & Kamdar, 2011) and reflect a high concern for oneself and low concern for others (Gelfand et al., 2001; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). The fact that SO-like behaviors and motivations arise in many selling situations suggests that people may see SO as a general approach to selling situations rather than an approach specific to salespeople.

Thus, we propose that SO, defined cross-occupationally as the use of high-pressure persuasion tactics to elicit an immediate, self-interested economic transaction, may represent an occupational rather than a salesperson-specific stereotype. In other words, we suggest that people could theoretically perceive many occupations—any in which practitioners routinely sell—as reliant on SO. Yet, we also suggest that laypeople are likely to perceive SO as a more integral part of the job in some occupations than others. In other words, they will likely stereotype occupations as relatively more HISO or LISO—a continuous indicator of the extent to which SO is stereotypically seen as integral. The obvious question is which occupations are which. Given the lack of prior research on this topic, we fundamentally treat it as an empirical question.

At the same time, the definition of SO does appear more consistent with some occupations than others. In particular, SO would seem less applicable to occupations in which practitioners' selling is not stereotypically motivated by self-interest (e.g., nonprofit management, healthcare, teaching) and/or whose jobs do not stereotypically emphasize interpersonal persuasion (e.g., accounting, sports). Conversely, SO would seem more applicable

to occupations widely and stereotypically seen as engaging in frequent self-interested persuasion (e.g., advertising, marketing, investment banking, consulting, politics)—as reflected, for example, in many recent movies and television shows emphasizing self-interested persuasion in these types of occupations (e.g., *Mad Men*, *The Big Short*, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, *House of Lies*, *House of Cards).*[2] Our pilot studies investigate the aforementioned occupations and others, empirically examining SO as an occupational stereotype and thus providing novel insights about the activities stereotypically associated with various occupations.

Deception, SO, Competence, and Hiring

The stereotypical association between particular occupations and SO holds direct implications for that way perceivers react to deceivers. Since deception sends the clear signal that the deceiver is more focused on their own outcomes than honesty (Gunia, Wang, Huang, & Murnighan, 2012), perceivers generally make many negative inferences about deceivers (e.g., that they are untrustworthy: Kim et al., 2004; unlikable: Tyler et al., 2006; or incompetent: Stellar & Willer, 2018). Yet, the minor overlap between SO and deception (Figure 1, Panel A, Section II), begins to suggest that perceivers may not entirely disapprove of deceivers.

In particular, some selling tactics do involve deceptive, self-interested persuasion. For example, an individual might deceptively and self-interestedly exaggerate a product's benefits to persuade someone to buy it. Since this form of deception actually serves as a self-interested, persuasive selling tactic (i.e., overlaps with SO), it may provide a positive indication of the individual's ability to engage in SO more generally, including its many self-interested but non-deceptive forms. The ability to engage in SO, in turn, should signal the deceptive individual's

[2] Although these occupations vary on numerous dimensions beyond selling orientation, we suggest that selling orientation represents a crucial dimension because of its generality and the links with deception described below.

likely competence in occupations stereotyped as reliant on SO (i.e., HISO occupations). Put differently, deceptive behaviors related to selling (Figure 1, Panel A, Section II) should signal that the deceiver has the qualities necessary to competently complete the job in HISO occupations (e.g., their competence *as an investment banker*). Since research has documented positive interpersonal reactions to prosocial (Levine & Schweitzer, 2015) but not self-interested deception (as far as we know), we consider this an interesting possibility on its own.

Even more interesting and the focus of our research, though, are the behaviors in Section III of Figure 1's Panel A. As noted, this section consists of deceptive behaviors not intended as selling tactics. For example, individuals may deceive to evade tough questions from their boss (e.g., "Are you on track to finish that project on time?"). Since this type of deception is not directly related to selling (i.e., does not overlap with SO), Panel A suggests it should not provide information about SO. However, important findings from the negotiation literature point to a different conclusion: that individuals may conflate various forms of deception with SO.

As noted, the negotiation literature has studied distributive negotiation strategies, which resemble SO in terms of their overt behaviors (self-interested persuasion) and underlying motivations (high focus on self / low focus on others). Indeed, the dual concern model of negotiation (e.g., Pruitt & Rubin, 1986) explains distributive strategies using the same models of motivation as the selling literature (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1970a). These parallels between distributive strategies and SO allow us to generalize from another important finding in the negotiation literature: that negotiators make few distinctions between distributive strategies and deception (Gunia, 2018; Schweitzer et al., 2005). That is, real negotiators tend to conflate distributive strategies and deception (Schweitzer et al., 2005), seeing them as essentially the same thing despite theoretical distinctions between the two (e.g., Shell, 1999; Thompson, 2001).

If people do not readily distinguish between deception and distributive strategies, and if distributive strategies have much in common with SO, then people may not distinguish between deception and SO either. Instead, they may see various forms of deception, even when unrelated to selling, as similar to SO. Figure 1 (Panel B) depicts this possibility, showing that people may conflate deception unrelated to selling with SO.

If people conflate deception unrelated to selling with SO, then they may see such deception as indicative of an individual's ability to engage in SO, and thus of the individual's competence in HISO (but not LISO) occupations. In sum, and in spite of substantial research and rhetoric documenting negative interpersonal reasons to deception, we predict that deception, even when unrelated to selling, will signal an individual's competence in HISO but not LISO occupations—with stereotypical perceptions of the occupation's SO as the implicit mediator:

Hypothesis 1*:* Perceivers will rate people who engage in deception unrelated to selling as more competent in HISO than LISO occupations.

Hypothesis 2: The extent to which an occupation is stereotyped as HISO will mediate the effect of the occupation on the perceived occupational competence of a deceiver.

Although we primarily compare perceptions of deception across HISO and LISO occupations, our theory also hints that deception may, in some circumstances, signal: 1) more competence *than honesty* within HISO occupations, and 2) competence in *absolute terms* within HISO occupations. Several of our studies test and support these provocative possibilities, though our main prediction compares perceptions of deception across HISO and LISO occupations since the precise level of competence signaled by deception probably depends on many factors outside the scope of our research (e.g., the type and target of lie, reputation of liar).

Intriguingly, H1-H2 are broadly consistent with Gallup polling about the perceived ethicality of people in various occupations (http://www.gallup.com/poll/1654/honesty-ethics-professions.aspx) as well as an isolated finding in Stellar & Willer's (2018) Study 1: that unethical behavior was somewhat more indicative of incompetence among teachers and researchers (presumably LISO) than investment bankers (presumably HISO). However, occupational variance was not the focus of that paper nor pursued further, as it is here.

Finally, we explore one way in which this association may contribute to the proliferation of deception: through the selection (i.e., hiring) of deceptive individuals into HISO occupations. According to Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model, one reason individuals get selected for positions is that their skillset seems to fit the relevant job requirements (also see Kim et al., 2004). If deception signals the ability to engage in SO, and if SO is seen as integral to HISO occupations (H1-H2), then deceivers should seem to fit well in HISO occupations, leading others to actively hire them into such occupations in organizations.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals who engage in deception will be hired into HISO more often than LISO occupations.

We primarily compare the hiring of deceptive individuals across HISO and LISO occupations, but we also investigate the interesting possibility that deceptive individuals are hired more than *honest* individuals into HISO occupations (and are hired at greater than chance rates).

If H3 obtains, then HISO occupations may eventually become populated with many individuals who are likely to deceive. This possibility has some troubling corollaries. First, since many of the presumably HISO occupations (e.g., investment banking, advertising) are also associated with high pay (Smith, 2015), deception may come to be seen as a prerequisite for pay, further contributing to societal confusion about the value of deception. Second, deceivers who

are hired into HISO occupations may not restrict their deceit to selling contexts. Instead, they may commit various acts of deception, some that harm their organization (e.g., embezzling, padding expenses). Thus, organizations employing many HISO practitioners may face the risk of spillover deception. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, our predictions suggest that deception may proliferate in HISO occupations even though deception is vilified in other contexts. Thus, our research not only provides a framework for thinking about the occupations in which deception may signal competence and a theoretical explanation for why that happens. It also connects directly to the puzzle at the outset of the paper, suggesting that deception may persist because deceivers do not always react as negatively as research or rhetoric suggest.

The Current Research

Six studies investigate the predictions across multiple populations and paradigms. Pilot Studies A-B explore the occupations stereotyped as HISO vs. LISO and validate our Selling Orientation (SO) Scale. Studies 1-2 use scenarios to document occupational variance in the perceived competence of a deceiver (H1-H2; Study 1), and to explore perceptions of deceivers vs. honest and neutral individuals (Study 2). Studies 3-4 use laboratory paradigms to document that people not only perceive deception as a signal of competence in HISO occupations; they also hire deceptive individuals into these occupations at elevated rates (selection; H3). Overall, the results support all three hypotheses, suggesting that deception signals competence in HISO occupations, leading to the selection of deceptive individuals into HISO occupations. Across all studies, the target sample size or the length of data collection was determined in advance, and we report all measures and conditions collected. We preregistered Studies 2 and 4.

Pilot Studies

We conducted two pilot studies to explore which occupations people stereotype as HISO vs. LISO and to develop a reliable measure of (perceived) SO. As an initial test of the premise that occupations vary in SO, Pilot A prompted participants to read seven statements characterizing SO as an occupational stereotype, then rate the extent to which these statements collectively describe each of 32 occupations from O*Net: an exhaustive database of occupations developed by the U.S. Department of Labor and described as "the nation's primary source of occupational information" (www.onetonline.org). We predicted that occupations would vary in SO. Pilot B then validated the seven items as an *SO Scale* and tested the scale's convergent and divergent validity across six target occupations. We predicted that our *SO Scale* would converge with traditional indicators of SO and diverge from related but differentiable constructs.

Pilot A Methods

Participants. We intended to recruit 200 Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) participants. We ended up with a final sample of 204 participants (112 Men; *M* age = 35 years, *SD* = 10, *M* work experience = 14 years, *SD* = 10) who participated in this study for $0.75. All discrepancies between intended and actual sample sizes are due to unintended over-recruitment (e.g., because participants started the study before learning that the quota had been met). Compared to undergraduates, MTurk has been characterized as more diverse and representative, and at least as reliable (e.g., Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

SO. Because the original items used to measure SO (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) focused specifically on an approach that a salesperson might use to sell a physical product to a customer (e.g., "If I am not sure a product is right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to get him to buy"), we could not readily use them to measure SO as a cross-occupational stereotype. Thus, we constructed a new scale to portray SO as a selling approach relevant across a variety of

occupations (later called the "*SO Scale*"). Guided by the original conception of SO (e.g., Frank & Parke, 2006, Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Thomas et al., 2001) as well as the underlying motivational theory (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1970b), we wrote seven items capturing the two dimensions of the multidimensional SO construct: persuasion (e.g., "People in this occupation spend much of their time convincing others to make a purchase") and self-interest (e.g., "Successful members of this occupation achieve outcomes that benefit themselves and their own organization more than outcomes that benefit others."). Appendix A lists all seven items.

Occupations. Before validating our *SO Scale* and evaluating its convergent and divergent validity (Pilot B), we sought to test the basic premise that occupations are perceived to vary in SO. Accordingly, we presented the seven items comprising the prospective scale, asking participants to evaluate how well they collectively described a variety of occupations. To generate these occupations, we extracted two common occupations from each of the 16 career clusters in the exhaustive and widely used O*NET database. In some cases, O*NET refers to common occupations using uncommon names (e.g., "management analysts" for "consultants"), so we relabeled these occupations, typically by replacing the given name with one of the "sample of reported job titles" listed within the occupation. Figure 2 lists all 32 occupations.

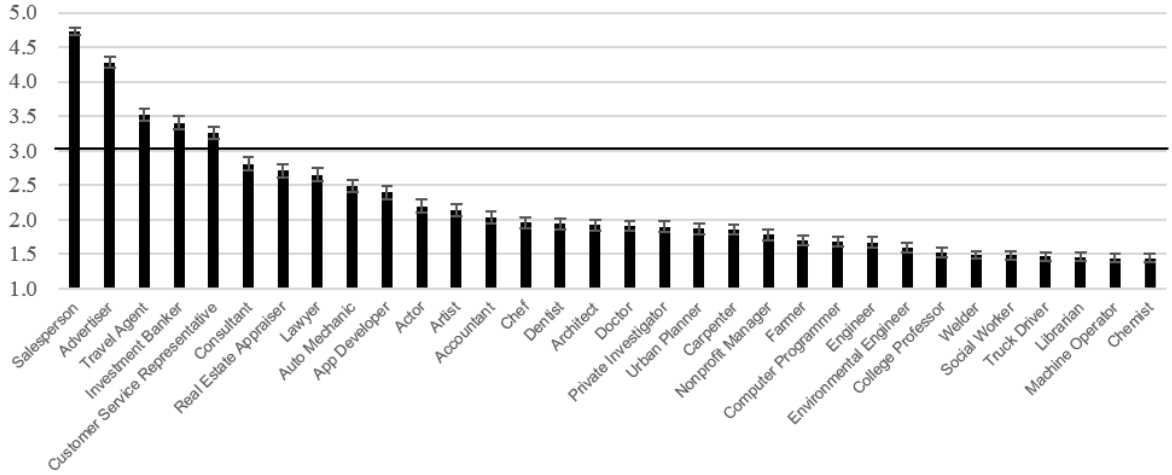
Design and procedure. This study did not include any manipulated variables. Rather, participants first read the seven items intended to comprise our *SO Scale,* described as "a list of statements that describe some occupations better than others." Participants then rated the extent to which the statements collectively described each of 32 occupations using a five-point scale (1 = Above statements DO NOT describe this occupation well, 5 = Above statements DO describe this occupation well). Participants concluded by answering some demographic questions.

Pilot A Results and Discussion

Predictions and analyses. We expected participants to perceive occupations as varying in SO, with some above and some below the scale midpoint (3). To compare multiple discrete observations, the current study orders the occupations from highest to lowest in SO and compares each occupation's mean SO to the midpoint. Note that Studies 2 and 3 involve occupations that we categorized (a priori) as high in SO (HISO) or low in SO (LISO), based on the results of the pilot studies. Accordingly, we use ANOVAs and planned contrasts to compare HISO and LISO occupations in these studies.

Results. Figure 2 shows participants' mean SO ratings along with standard errors. Results suggest substantial heterogeneity across occupations but notable agreement within occupations (relatively small standard errors). In line with our expectations, occupations like salesperson, advertiser, and investment banker were rated significantly above the scale midpoint in SO, whereas occupations like accountant, nonprofit manager, doctor, and engineer were rated significantly below the midpoint. Additionally, the results indicated that the two occupations extracted from the same O*NET career cluster (e.g., accounting and investment banking) were sometimes rated quite differently in SO, suggesting that our scale was not derivative of career cluster. These results, which are consistent with our assumptions, suggest that occupations are perceived to vary systematically and predictably in SO.

Figure 2. Pilot A Occupations and SO Ratings*



Note. Error bars represent +/- 1 SE. SO across 32 occupations in descending order.
*All occupations significantly differ from the midpoint (3) in SO.

Pilot B Methods

Participants. We intended to recruit 300 MTurk participants. We ended up with a final sample of 334 Amazon MTurk participants (190 Men; *M* age = 36 years, *SD* = 11, *M* work experience = 15 years, *SD* = 10) who participated in this study for $0.75.

Design and procedure. We randomly assigned participants to evaluate one of six occupations from Pilot A (investment banker, salesperson, advertiser, consultant, nonprofit manager, or accountant), using a between-subjects design. These occupations were selected for this and later studies because Pilot A suggested they vary in SO ($p < .007$ for all paired comparisons); additionally, these occupations are relatively similar in required education and well-represented in our Study 3 and 4 samples. This approach allowed us to examine a core set of occupations and establish convergence, while capturing occupational variation. Although consultant was rated unexpectedly low in SO in Pilot A, it was close to the mean across all studies. Thus, we consider consulting to be a quasi-control condition in Studies 1, 2, and 3.

Participants in Pilot B were asked to think very carefully about their one assigned occupation and answer a series of questions about it. First, participants responded to each of the seven items from Pilot A, which comprised our *SO Scale* (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree; see Appendix A). Next, we sought to establish the scale's convergent and divergent validity vis-à-vis related constructs. Because our scale was inspired by the SO items from Saxe & Weitz (1982), we expected it to show a large positive correlation with those items but a smaller or non-significant relationship with the customer orientation (CO) items.

Additionally, we sought to establish divergent validity from two personality measures that could plausibly apply to occupations and overlap with SO: Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 1970) and the Honesty-Humility dimension of the HEXACO Scale (Ashton, Lee & de Vries, 2014). Given SO's focus on persuading customers to make immediate self-interested purchases, it is possible that people perceive HISO practitioners as Machiavellian ("manipulating others for personal gain, often against the other's self-interest"; Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996: 285) or low in honesty and humility. However, we expected divergence (as indicated by smaller or non-significant correlations) because SO has a narrower focus than Machiavellianism (on selling-specific behaviors) and is not synonymous with dishonesty or a lack of humility (despite the conflation process described above). Participants indicated how most members of their assigned occupation would react to each item in these two scales (1 = Most would strongly disagree, 5 = Most would strongly agree), then answered some demographic questions.

Pilot B Results and Discussion

Predictions and analysis. We expected our SO items to form a reliable *SO Scale* on which occupations predictably varied. We also expected our *SO Scale* to converge with the SO items from Saxe and Weitz (1982) and diverge from the scale's CO items as well as

Machiavellianism and Honesty-Humility. Since we were validating our *SO Scale* for the first time, we initially conducted an exploratory factor analysis to get a sense of its factor structure. We then conducted a one-way between-subjects ANOVA, with occupation as the factor, to test for occupational variance in SO, supported by comparisons to the scale midpoint. Finally, having validated our scale's statistical properties, we conducted a correlation analysis and confirmatory factor analysis to examine convergent and divergent validity vis-à-vis other validated scales.

Scale reliability. An exploratory factor analysis on the seven items intended to comprise our *SO Scale* yielded one factor with Eigenvalue greater than one, explaining 63.24% of the variance. Thus, all seven questions were averaged to form a *SO Scale* ($\alpha = .90$). Factor analyses also indicated that the items within the original SOCO scale (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) loaded best onto separate SO and CO scales (αs = .96 and .84), and also that the Machiavellianism and Honesty-Humility items loaded onto reliable single-factor scales (αs = .92 and .86).

Occupational variance in SO. A one-way ANOVA on our *SO Scale* revealed a significant effect of occupation, $F(5,328) = 79.85$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .55$. Table 1 lists the descriptive statistics for each occupation. In accordance with Pilot A and our expectation that the six occupations would be perceived to vary systematically in SO, advertiser, salesperson, and investment banker were rated significantly higher than the scale midpoint of 3 (ps < .001), consultant marginally higher than the midpoint ($p = .09$), and nonprofit and accountant significantly lower than the midpoint (ps < .001). This establishes the HISO and LISO occupations used in the rest of this research, with consultant treated as a quasi-control condition.

Table 1. Pilot B Descriptive Statistics by Condition

Occupation	N		*SO Scale* (range = 1-5)	SO from SOCO (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) (range = 1-9)	CO from SOCO (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) (range = 1-9)	Machiavellianism (range = 1-5)	Honesty-Humility (range = 1-5)
a. Advertiser	59	Mean	4.39[c,d,e,f]	7.29[c,d,e,f]	6.11[d]	3.36[d,e,f]	2.39[d,e,f]
		SD	0.69	1.46	1.84	.71	.68
b. Salesperson	60	Mean	4.39[c,d,e,f]	7.07[c,d,e,f]	6.07[d]	3.36[d,e,f]	2.38[d,e,f]
		SD	0.52	1.42	1.15	.61	.75
c. Investment Banker	58	Mean	3.73[a,b,d,e,f]	6.13[a,b,d,e,f]	5.78[d]	3.28[d,e,f]	2.32[d,e,f]
		SD	0.75	1.49	1.43	.67	.82
d. Consultant	50	Mean	3.19[a,b,c,e,f]	4.72[a,b,c,e,f]	7.12[a,b,c,e,f]	2.91[a,b,c,e]	2.65[a,b,c,e,f]
		SD	0.78	1.97	1.25	.51	.67
e. Nonprofit Manager	53	Mean	2.51[a,c,d]	3.60[a,c,d]	5.81[d]	2.57[a,c,d]	3.34[a,c,d,f]
		SD	0.85	2.10	1.91	.72	.79
f. Accountant	54	Mean	2.40[a,b,c,d]	3.26[a,b,c,d]	6.04[d]	2.76[a,b,c]	2.93[a,b,c,d,e]
		SD	0.84	1.87	1.68	.55	.58
Total	334	Mean	3.48	5.43	6.14	3.06	2.65
		SD	1.09	2.34	1.61	.70	.80

Note. This table is sorted in descending order on the *SO Scale*. Significant differences are denoted with superscripts. Letters denote significant differences vs.: advertiser (a), salesperson (b), investment banker (c), consultant (d), nonprofit manager (e), accountant (f).

Convergent and divergent validity. As expected, our *SO Scale* showed a strong positive correlation with the SO items from Saxe & Weitz's (1982) original scale (r = .85, p < .001), suggesting convergence between our *SO Scale* and SO as conceived for salespeople. Despite this strong correlation, a confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the *SO Scale* and original SO items fit better as two separate factors (CFI = .96; TLI = .95; RMSEA = .096) than one factor (CFI = .88; TLI = .85; RMSEA = .17). This makes sense since the *SO Scale* measures an occupation- rather than individual-level construct, and it supports our use of a new scale.

In terms of divergent validity, the *SO Scale* showed no correlation with the CO items from Saxe and Weitz (r = -.02, p = .71) and smaller albeit still-significant correlations with Machiavellianism (r = .51, p < .001) and Honesty-Humility (r = -.46, p < .001). Collectively, these results suggest that our *SO Scale*, developed to measure SO as an occupational rather than a salesperson-specific stereotype, is consistent with SO as conceived for salespeople. However, our scale does not appear derivative of the original SO items nor plausibly related constructs. Together with the results of Pilot A, these results suggest that SO represents an occupational

stereotype on which occupations are perceived to vary systematically. Our next several studies test the consequences of the SO stereotype.

Study 1: Deception across Occupations

Study 1 provides an initial test of H1-H2. Specifically, we manipulate occupation to examine whether deception is seen as more competent in some occupations than others, and whether an occupation's SO can explain these differences. We expect deception to be perceived as a greater signal of competence in HISO than LISO occupations.

Methods

Participants. We set the a priori goal of recruiting 300 adults from Amazon MTurk and ended up with a final sample of 327 participants (193 Men; *M* age = 33 years, *SD* = 10, *M* work experience = 13 years, *SD* = 10), who completed this study in exchange for $0.75.

Design and procedure. We randomly assigned participants to read about a practitioner named Julie from one of six occupations (investment banker, salesperson, advertiser, consultant, nonprofit employee, or accountant). Whereas the pilot and subsequent studies referred to a nonprofit "manager," we used the term "employee" in this study to make sure an unintended status difference was not driving our effects. We find no systematic differences across studies.

After learning the practitioner's occupation, participants either read a scenario about Julie's behavior and assessed her occupational competence, or rated her occupation's SO (order counterbalanced). The scenario indicated that Julie went on a work trip and received a blank receipt for a taxi ride. When filing for reimbursement, she recalled that the ride cost $40 but requested and received a $50 reimbursement (see Appendix B for the scenario and all scale items). Note that this deception, by design, did not involve the core selling components of her job (i.e., came from Section III in Figure 1's Panel A), and was costly for the company. After

reading the scenario, participants answered six questions about Julie's occupational competence; e.g., "Julie will be competent in her career as [a/an occupation]" (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). A factor analysis indicated that they loaded onto a single factor explaining 81% of the variance; they were averaged to form an *Occupational Competence Scale* (α = .95).

Participants also completed the *SO Scale* from Pilot Study B, personalized to refer to "Julie's occupation"; e.g., "Julie's occupation involves getting people to buy things." (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; see Appendix B).[3] A factor analysis indicated that all of the items again loaded into a single *SO Scale*, explaining 60% of the variance (α = .89). Participants concluded by answering three comprehension check questions about whether Julie lied (Julie lied / stretched the truth / was honest (reverse-scored); 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; α = .73), a manipulation check about her occupation, an attention check, an open-ended question about the study, and some demographic questions.

Results

Predictions and analyses. We predicted that the deceiver would be considered more competent in the HISO occupations (investment banker, salesperson, advertiser) than the LISO occupations (nonprofit employee, accountant); we were agnostic about consultant. We tested this prediction in two ways, by running: 1) a one-way between-subjects ANOVA on our dependent variables, using occupation as the factor (6 levels), and 2) a one-way between-subjects ANOVA on our dependent variables, using HISO/LISO as the factor (2 levels, with investment banker, salesperson, and advertiser coded as HISO and nonprofit employee and accountant coded as

[3] In addition to this slight rewording, the scale included an item that other studies do not (an eighth scale item): "People in Julie's occupation often have to 'make it up.'" These differences stem from the fact that this study was run before we received helpful reviews encouraging us to drop this item in future studies (which we did) including the pilots (which were conducted later).

LISO). For the sake of brevity and clarity, we present the second set of analyses in the main manuscript and the occupation-level analyses in the supplemental online material (SOM 1.1).[4] For completeness, we also present the means and standard deviations for each scale, by occupation, in Table 2. We follow a similar protocol in Studies 2 and 3.

We also predicted that the *SO Scale* would mediate the relationship between occupation and the perceived competence of a deceiver. We test this prediction using a bootstrap test for mediation with 10,000 samples (Hayes, 2013; SPSS Macro PROCESS), with HISO/LISO occupation as the independent variable, the *SO Scale* as the mediator, and the *Occupational Competence Scale* as the dependent variable. Mediation results comparing the discrete occupations are provided in our supplement (SOM 1.2).

Exclusions and initial analyses. Four participants did not correctly identify the practitioner's occupation, and one additional participant failed the attention check. Although we report analyses for the full sample, results do not change if these individuals are excluded. Responses to the open-ended question generally revealed no awareness of the study's purpose. Question order had no effects and is not discussed further.

Manipulation check. Consistent with the intent of our manipulation, participants recognized that the practitioner lied ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.13$; greater than the scale midpoint of 4; $t(326) = 25.49$, $p < .001$).

SO Scale. Consistent with the pilot studies, a one-way ANOVA on the *SO Scale* revealed a significant effect of HISO/LISO, $F(1,272) = 308.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .53$: The occupations classified as HISO (salesperson, advertiser, investment banker) were rated higher on the *SO Scale* than the occupations classified as LISO (nonprofit employee, accountant; see Table 2).

[4] We thank our review team for this helpful suggestion.

Occupational competence. H1 predicted that deception would signal more occupational competence in HISO than LISO occupations. In support, a one-way ANOVA on the *Occupational Competence Scale* revealed a significant effect of HISO/LISO occupation, $F(1,272) = 32.56$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$: As shown in Table 2, the deceiver was rated as more competent in the HISO than the LISO occupations.

Mediation results. H2 predicted that the effect of occupation on the perceived competence of a deceiver would be mediated by the *SO Scale*. In support, a bootstrapped mediation test (Hayes, 2013; SPSS Macro PROCESS using 10,000 samples, as described above) revealed that the 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of the *SO Scale* did not include zero, C.I. = [.44, 1.10]. In other words, the *SO Scale* mediated the effect of HISO/LISO occupation on the deceiver's perceived occupational competence.

Table 2. Study 1 Descriptive Statistics by Condition

Occupation	N		*SO Scale* (range = 1-5)	*Occupational Competence Scale* (range = 1-7)
a. Salesperson	54	Mean	4.22	5.39
		SD	0.47	0.98
b. Advertiser	57	Mean	4.12	5.16
		SD	0.57	1.03
c. Investment Banker	53	Mean	3.61	4.89
		SD	0.63	1.00
Total HISO (combining a,b,c above)	164	Mean	3.99	5.15
		SD	0.62	1.02
d. Consultant	53	Mean	3.10	4.56
		SD	0.78	1.21
e. Nonprofit Employee	55	Mean	2.69	4.23
		SD	0.84	1.31
f. Accountant	55	Mean	2.39	4.43
		SD	0.58	1.40
Total LISO (combining e,f above)	110	Mean	2.54	4.33
		SD	0.73	1.35
Total	327	Mean	3.36	4.78
		SD	0.95	1.23

Discussion

In addition to revealing consistent occupational differences in SO, Study 1 supported H1-2 by demonstrating that a deceptive practitioner is seen as more competent in HISO than LISO occupations, and that SO mediates this difference. We note that we sought to replicate this study with a different sample and a few minor design changes (see Study S1; SOM 2 in the online supplement). The next study sought to remedy some weaknesses of Study 1 and compare perceptions of deceptive vs. honest and neutral individuals across HISO and LISO occupations.

Study 2: Deception and Honesty across Occupations

Study 2 included both a condition in which the focal individual acted honestly and a neutral control condition. The inclusion of these conditions allowed us to isolate any positive signals associated with deception from any main effects of occupation. We also sought to replicate the Study 1 results in a different context. This study was preregistered at aspredicted.org (http://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=ap9e64).

Participants. We set the a priori goal of recruiting 300 adults from Amazon MTurk and ended up with a final sample of 313 participants (180 Men; *M* age = 35 years, *SD* = 10, *M* work experience = 14 years, *SD* = 10), who completed this study in exchange for $1.00.

Design and procedure. We randomly assigned participants to condition using a 6(Occupation: Investment banker, salesperson, advertiser, consultant, nonprofit manager, or accountant) x 3(Statement: Deception, honesty, or control) mixed within-between subjects design; the first factor was manipulated within- and the second factor between-subjects. A mixed design was used due to ensure sufficient power, given the large number of conditions.

Participants read about a practitioner named James who was “considering entering a new occupation.” Before answering questions about his new occupation, however, participants learned some information about his behavior in a past job. Specifically, participants learned that

James had worked for a boss who loved sailing, but James did not. One day, James's boss asked whether he liked sailing. In response, James "said that he did" (deception condition), "said that he did not" (honesty condition), or simply "answered" (control condition; see Appendix C).

Participants were then reminded that James was considering a career in a new occupation and asked to answer a set of questions about each of the six focal occupations, presented in a random order. Specifically, participants rated James' occupational competence within each occupation, using the same items as in Study 1 (for each occupation, $\alpha > .96$). Participants also rated each of the six occupations on the *SO Scale* from Pilot Study B (for each occupation, $\alpha > .86$). Participants concluded by answering a manipulation check question asking whether the practitioner had lied (1 = definitely not, 5 = definitely), along with some demographic questions.

Results

Predictions and analyses. As preregistered, we predicted that deceivers would be perceived as more competent in the HISO than LISO occupations. We also used this study to compare the competence of those who deceive vs. those who are honest or make a control statement, across HISO and LISO occupations.

Thus, our main analysis was a 6(Occupation) x 3(Statement) mixed within-between subjects ANOVA, with the first factor within- and the second factor between-subjects, on the *Occupational Competence Scale* and *SO Scale*. Our secondary analysis was a 2(HISO/LISO) x 3(Statement) mixed within-between subjects ANOVA. In this analysis, we classified occupations into HISO and LISO categories as we had in Study 1, per our preregistration. For the sake of brevity, clarity, and consistency with Study 1, we present the results of the secondary analysis in our main manuscript. For completeness, we also present the occupation-level means and standard deviations for each of our scales in Table 3, and we present occupation-level analyses in the

online supplement (SOM 3.1). We conducted a one-way ANOVA (using Statement as the factor) to examine perceived deception (the manipulation check).

We also predicted that the *SO Scale* would mediate the relationship between occupation and the perceived competence of a deceiver (H2). As preregistered, we tested this hypothesis by limiting our analysis to the Deception condition and testing for mediation using the MEMORE macro (Montoya & Hayes, 2017). Specifically, we tested whether the (within-subjects) difference in SO across HISO and LISO occupations would mediate the (within-subjects) difference in the perceived competence of deceivers across HISO and LISO occupations. Occupation-level mediation analyses are presented in the online supplement (SOM 3.2).

Manipulation check. A one-way ANOVA on the manipulation check question with Statement as the factor was significant, $F(2,310) = 201.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .57$. As intended, participants recognized that the practitioner lied more in the deception condition ($M = 4.60$, $SD = .99$) than the control ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.18$) or honesty conditions ($M = 1.55$, $SD = 1.22$), all of which differed from each other (ps < .001). This suggests that the manipulation was successful.

SO Scale. Consistent with Study 1, a 2 x 3 mixed within-between subjects ANOVA on the *SO Scale* revealed only a main effect of HISO/LISO, $F(1,310) = 823.08$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .73$: The occupations classified as HISO were rated higher in the *SO Scale* than the occupations classified as LISO (see Table 3). There was no main effect of Statement, $F(2,310) = .72$, $p = .49$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, nor a HISO/LISO x Statement interaction, $F(2,310) = 1.80$, $p = .17$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

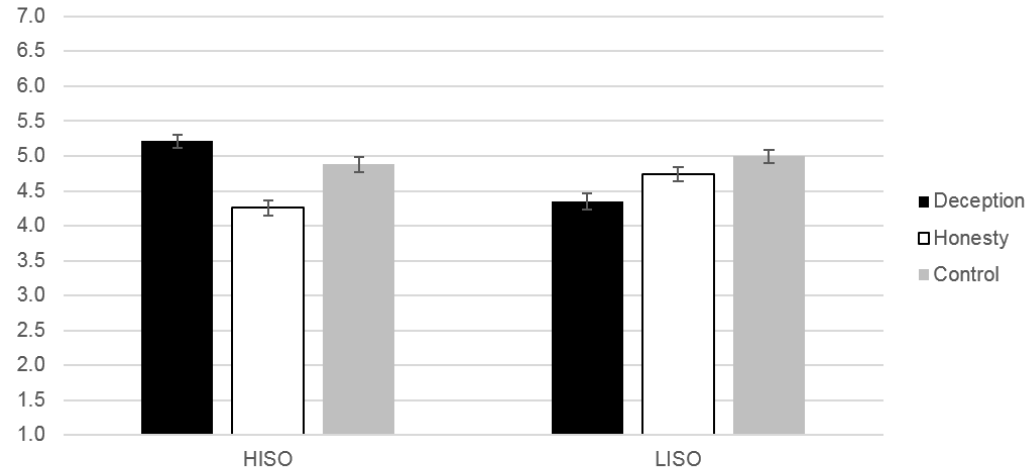
Table 3. Study 2 Descriptive Statistics

Occupation		*SO Scale* (range = 1-5)				*Occupational Competence Scale* (range = 1-7)			
		Deception	Honesty	Control	Total	Deception	Honesty	Control	Total
a. Salesperson	Mean	4.44	4.40	4.38	4.41	5.59	4.08	4.82	4.85
	SD	0.70	0.57	0.71	0.66	1.12	1.48	1.37	1.46
b. Advertiser	Mean	4.37	4.31	4.23	4.31	5.40	4.18	4.91	4.85
	SD	0.72	0.65	0.74	0.70	1.15	1.19	1.20	1.28
c. Investment Banker	Mean	3.65	3.60	3.67	3.64	4.65	4.50	4.91	4.68
	SD	0.90	0.80	0.86	0.85	1.37	1.07	1.15	1.22
Total HISO (combining a,b,c above)	Mean	4.15	4.10	4.09	4.12	5.21	4.26	4.88	4.79
	SD	0.59	0.52	0.62	0.58	0.96	1.04	1.08	1.10
d. Consultant	Mean	2.91	2.92	2.88	2.90	4.59	4.59	5.12	4.76
	SD	0.92	0.89	0.99	0.93	1.27	1.11	1.08	1.18
e. Nonprofit Manager	Mean	2.28	2.57	2.54	2.46	4.37	4.58	4.97	4.63
	SD	0.85	0.98	1.01	0.95	1.34	1.15	1.11	1.23
f. Accountant	Mean	2.20	2.27	2.33	2.26	4.33	4.89	5.02	4.73
	SD	0.91	0.93	0.98	0.94	1.36	1.06	1.07	1.21
Total LISO (combining e,f above)	Mean	2.24	2.42	2.44	2.36	4.35	4.73	4.99	4.68
	SD	0.78	0.83	0.89	0.84	1.22	1.00	0.97	1.10

Occupational competence. A 2 x 3 mixed within-between subjects ANOVA on the *Occupational Competence Scale* revealed a significant main effect of Statement, $F(2,310) = 6.39$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$, such that the control statement signaled the greatest occupational competence, and honesty signaled the lowest occupational competence. There was no main effect of HISO/LISO, $F(1,310) = 2.00$, $p = .16$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$.

Importantly, these effects were qualified by a significant Occupation x Statement interaction, $F(2,310) = 41.53$ $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .21$. This interaction reflected the fact that, in support of H1, deceivers were considered to be more competent in HISO than LISO occupations, $t(109) = 7.04$, $p < .001$, $d = .78$ (see Figure 3 and Table 3); however, the reverse pattern held for honest practitioners $t(100) = 4.03$, $p < .001$, $d = .46$. Competence ratings in the control condition were similar across occupations.

Figure 3. Study 2 Occupational Competence Ratings



Note. Error bars represent +/- 1 SE. Occupational competence across occupations and statements.

Additionally, planned comparisons indicated that honesty was rated as significantly more competent than deception in LISO occupations, $t(209) = 2.50$, $p = .01$, $d = .34$, but deception was rated as significantly more competent *than honesty* in the HISO occupations, $t(209) = 6.93$, $p < .001$, $d = .95$. Finally, although this analysis was not preregistered, it is worth noting that the extent to which the practitioner was seen as lying (in the manipulation check question) correlated negatively with their competence in LISO occupations ($r = -.25$, $p < .001$) and positively in HISO occupations ($r = .31$, $p < .001$). Taken together, these findings provide consistent evidence that deception signals competence in HISO occupations, supporting and extending H1.

Mediation results. Finally, and in support of H2, the (within-subjects) difference in SO across HISO and LISO occupations was mediated by the (within-subjects) difference in the perceived competence of a deceiver across HISO and LISO occupations: The 95% confidence interval around the indirect effect of SO did not include zero, C.I. = [.68, 1.48], suggesting that deceivers were considered more competent in advertising, banking, and sales than nonprofit or accounting because of the former occupations' perceived reliance on SO.

Discussion

This study provided converging evidence that deception leads to perceptions of occupational competence in HISO occupations. The inclusion of honesty and control conditions allowed us to isolate the effects of deception itself. The results indicate that practitioners in HISO occupations are not simply seen as more competent than practitioners in LISO occupations. Rather, *deception* within HISO occupations is seen as more competent than deception within LISO occupations. Additionally, deception within HISO occupations is often seen as more competent *than honesty* within HISO occupations, and as competent in absolute terms. The perceived competence of HISO deceivers, in turn, is explained by the occupation's stereotypical reliance on SO. Notably, since this study examined the effects of deception unrelated to core selling responsibilities (in a prior job), it supports our reasoning that perceivers may conflate deception with current SO-related selling ability. We note that we also replicated the main results of this study with a sample of participants who aspired to enter the occupations under investigation; the results are reported in our supplemental materials (SOM 3).

Study 3: Deception and Hiring

Study 3 sought to deepen our findings by studying perceptions of deception in a more controlled context, the lab, and broaden them by studying selection (H3) as a potential contributor to the proliferation of deception.

Methods

Participants. We set the a priori target of recruiting as many participants as possible during a three-day laboratory session, from a paid subject pool at a Northeastern U.S. university. We ultimately ended with 196 participants (69 Men; *M* age = 20, *SD* = 3.09). Participants were paid $10 for participation in a one-hour laboratory session. This study was the first in the session.

Design and procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions from a 2-cell (Statement: deception or honesty) between-subjects design. Specifically, participants observed the behavior of a past participant who acted either deceptively or honestly in the two-party deception game (Erat & Gneezy, 2012; Levine & Schweitzer 2014; 2015).

Participants learned that the study was about evaluating others, and they believed they were observing a past participant. They learned that the past participant who they were observing had been assigned to the role of Sender and had been paired with another participant in the role of Receiver. Participants then learned about the deception game that the Sender had played. In this game, the Sender was asked to send the Receiver a message indicating the outcome of a random number generator, and the Receiver was then asked to report that outcome to the experimenter, who would pay both parties based on the Receiver's report. If the Receiver reported the correct number, the Sender would receive $1.75, and the Receiver would receive $1. If the Receiver reported an incorrect number, the Sender would receive $2, and the Receiver would receive $0. Thus, if the Sender lied, the Receiver would likely report an incorrect number (earning the Sender $2), but if the Sender told the truth, the Receiver would likely report the correct number (earning the Sender $1.75). In short, the Sender had a $.25 incentive to lie.

After reviewing this information, current participants completed a comprehension check to ensure they understood the game. Participants who failed this check were automatically kicked out of the study. (All analyses include only the 196 participants who completed the whole study; 19 participants began the study but did not pass the check). The remaining participants learned that the random number generator had produced the number 4, and the Sender had either lied (indicating: "The number picked was 2") or told the truth ("The number picked was 4").

Participants were then asked to imagine they were a hiring manager tasked with hiring the Sender into one of the six occupations from our previous studies (investment banking, salesperson, advertiser, consultant, nonprofit manager, or accountant). Participants were asked to hire the Sender into one of the six occupations. Next, participants were asked to rate their likelihood of hiring the Sender into each of the six occupations (1 = not at all likely, 7 = very likely), regardless of their initial hiring choice. Then, participants rated the Sender on his/her occupational competence in all six occupations, using three items from Study 1: "This person will…be successful in his/her career as an [occupation], make a good [occupation], do what it takes to get his/her job done in his/her career as an [occupation]" (αs for every occupation > .90). We used a shortened scale to reduce participant burden.[5]

Finally, participants completed a four-question manipulation check of perceived deception: "This person lied, was deceptive, displayed low integrity, told the truth (reverse-scored)" (α = .97; 1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree). Participants concluded the study by answering some demographic questions, including their own intended occupation.

Results

Predictions and analyses. We predicted that deceivers would be considered more competent in, and hired more often into, HISO than LISO occupations. As in Study 2, we also explored judgments of deceptive (versus honest) individuals in HISO and LISO occupations.

We conducted analyses at both the occupation- and the HISO/LISO level, as in Studies 1-2. As in those studies, we focus on the HISO/LISO level results in the main manuscript, coding

[5] In Studies 3 and 4, participants also rated how successful the Sender would be in HISO occupations, using an adaptation of our SO Scale. For brevity, and per feedback from our review team, we report the scale and its results in the supplemental materials (SOM 5.2 and 6.1).

the occupations the same way. We present the occupation-level means and standard deviations in Table 4, and the occupation-level ANOVA results in the supplemental materials (SOM 5.1).

We conducted a one-way ANOVA (using Statement as the factor) to examine perceived deception (the manipulation check). Since participants rated the deceptive or honest Sender's competence in, as well as their likelihood of hiring the deceptive or honest Sender into each occupation, we used mixed within-between subjects ANOVAs to examine the effects of Statement (between-subjects) and HISO/LISO (within-subjects) on these variables. We use a chi-square test of proportions to examine whether Senders were hired into HISO or LISO occupations with different frequencies, depending on whether they lied.

Manipulation check. A one-way ANOVA on perceived deception revealed a significant effect of Statement: Consistent with the intent of the manipulation, the Sender in the deception condition was seen as more deceptive (M = 5.85, SD = .94) than the Sender in the honesty condition (M = 1.52, SD = .69); $F(1,194) = 1345.28$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .87$.

Occupational competence. A mixed within-between subjects ANOVA, using HISO/LISO as the within-subjects factor and Statement as the between subjects factor, revealed a marginal effect of HISO/LISO, $F(1, 194) = 3.79$ $p = .053$, $\eta_p^2 = .019$, such that Senders were perceived to be somewhat more occupationally competent in HISO occupations than LISO occupations, and a significant effect of Statement, $F(1,194) = 22.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .10$, such that Senders were perceived to be more competent when they were honest than when they lied.

Importantly, and more relevant to our hypotheses, these effects were qualified by a significant HISO/LISO x Statement interaction $F(1,194) = 260.57$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .57$. The interaction reflected the fact that, in support of H1, deceivers were rated as more competent in

HISO than LISO occupations, $t(97) = 13.15$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.63$ (see Table 4); however, the reverse pattern held for honest individuals, $t(97) = 9.77$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.37$.

Additionally, planned comparisons indicated that honesty was rated as significantly more competent than deception in the LISO occupations, $t(194) = 13.52$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.74$, but deception was rated as significantly more competent *than honesty* in the HISO occupations, $t(195) = 6.69$, $p < .001$, $d = .88$. Finally, it is worth noting that deceptive Senders were rated as competent in HISO occupations in absolute terms ($t(97) = 9.10$, $p < .001$, compared to the scale midpoint of 4), and ratings of the Sender's deception correlated negatively with their competence in the LISO occupations ($r = -.72$, $p < .001$) but positively in the HISO occupations ($r = .44$, $p <$ 001). These results support H1, replicating and extending the results of Studies 1-2.

Table 4. Study 3 Descriptive Statistics

		Occupational Competence Scale (range = 1-7)			*Hiring Intentions* (range = 1-7)		
Occupation		Deception	Honesty	Total	Deception	Honesty	Total
a. Salesperson	Mean	5.14	4.20	4.67	4.93	4.28	4.60
	SD	1.18	1.31	1.33	1.37	1.31	1.38
b. Advertiser	Mean	4.63	4.03	4.33	4.31	3.99	4.15
	SD	1.27	1.19	1.27	1.41	1.26	1.34
c. Investment Banker	Mean	5.12	3.64	4.38	4.83	3.52	4.17
	SD	1.23	1.40	1.51	1.53	1.48	1.64
Total HISO (combining a,b,c above)	Mean	4.96	3.96	4.46	4.69	3.93	4.31
	SD	0.93	1.01	1.09	1.06	1.07	1.12
d. Consultant	Mean	3.81	4.95	4.38	3.46	5.01	4.23
	SD	1.16	1.19	1.30	1.39	1.07	1.46
e. Nonprofit Manager	Mean	2.84	5.63	4.23	2.30	5.76	4.03
	SD	1.44	1.16	1.91	1.35	1.04	2.11
f. Accountant	Mean	3.66	4.97	4.32	3.22	5.07	4.15
	SD	1.40	1.15	1.43	1.48	1.18	1.62
Total LISO (combining e,f above)	Mean	3.25	5.30	4.28	2.76	5.41	4.09
	SD	1.16	0.95	1.47	1.19	0.91	1.70

Hiring intentions. H3 suggested that deceptive individuals would get hired into HISO more often than LISO occupations. A mixed within-between subjects ANOVA on the hiring intention questions revealed a main effect of HISO/LISO, $F(1, 194) = 4.90$, $p = .028$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$, such that Senders were more likely to be hired in HISO occupations than LISO occupations, and

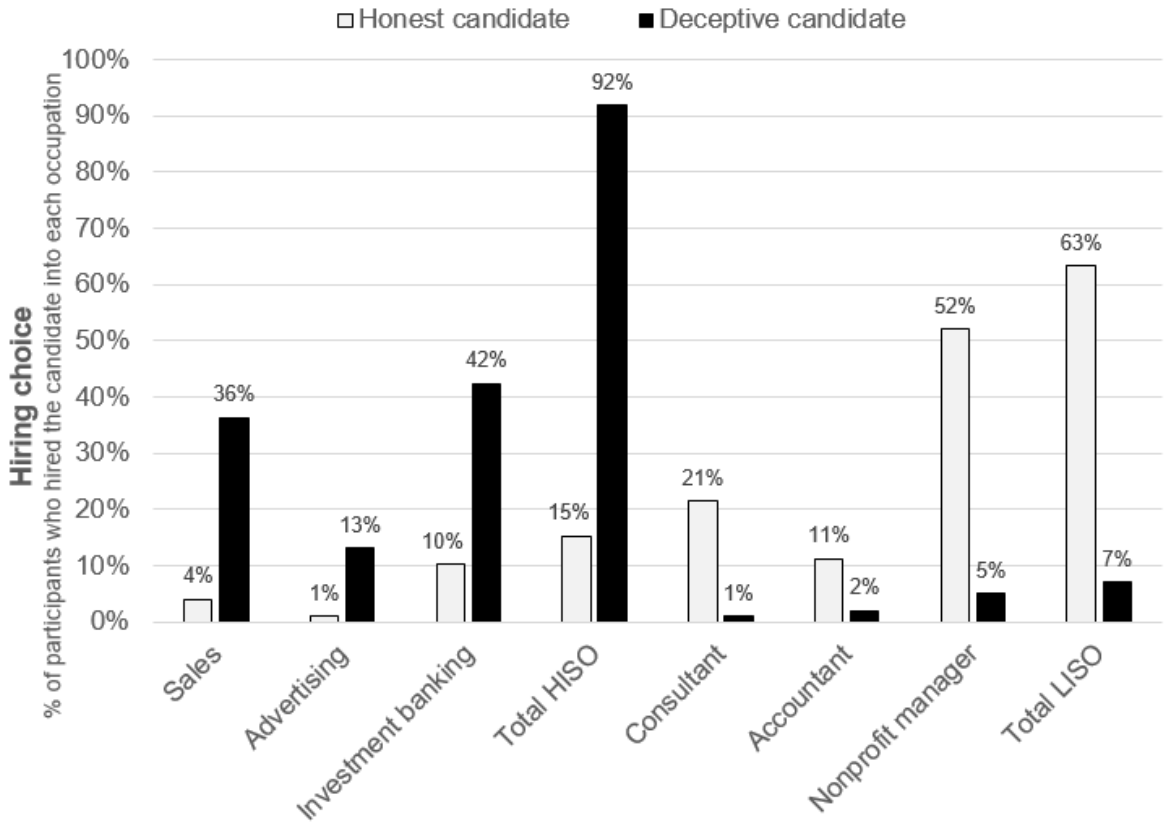
a significant effect of Statement, $F(1,194) = 68.95$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .26$, such that Senders were more likely to be hired when they were honest than when they lied.

Importantly, and more central to H3, these effects were qualified by a significant HISO/LISO x Statement interaction, $F(1,194) = 291.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .60$. This interaction reflected the fact that, in support of H3, participants more often intended to hire deceivers into the HISO than the LISO occupations; $t(97) = 13.83$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.71$ (see Table 4); however, the reverse pattern held for honest individuals; $t(97) = 10.37$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.43$.

Additionally, planned comparisons indicated that participants preferred to hire honest vs. deceptive individuals into LISO occupations, $t(194) = 17.49$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.50$, but they preferred to hire deceptive *vs. honest* individuals into HISO occupations, $t(195) = 4.64$, $p < .001$, $d = .65$. Finally, deceptive individuals were hired in absolute terms into the HISO occupations ($t(98) = 5.80$, $p < .001$, compared to scale midpoint of 4), and ratings of the Sender's deception were negatively associated with hiring intentions for the LISO occupations ($r = -.82$, $p < .001$) but positively for the HISO occupations ($r = .30$, $p = .001$). These results support and extend H3.

Hiring choice. We also found that participants were significantly more likely to hire Senders who had lied into HISO occupations (91.9% of those who lied) than LISO occupations (7.1%; 1% were hired into consulting, our quasi-control occupation). Conversely, they were more likely to hire Senders who had told the truth into LISO occupations (63.3% of those who told the truth) than HISO occupations (15.3%; 21.4% were hired into consulting); $\chi^2 = 97.21$, $p < .001$. Figure 4 depicts these results and the hiring patterns for each occupation individually.

Figure 4. Study 3 Hiring Choices



Discussion

This study replicated H1 in the lab, showing that deceivers are regarded as competent HISO practitioners. Additionally, it provided support for H3, indicating that deceptive individuals are more often hired into HISO than LISO occupations. Indeed, deceivers were hired more often than honest individuals into HISO occupations, and they were considered attractive hires in absolute terms. This suggests that deception can provide a positive signal of competence and career potential in HISO occupations, despite reflecting low integrity.

In reaching these conclusions, we recognize that the sparseness of the context and within-subjects manipulation of occupation may have produced some demand effects (particularly with respect to hiring choice). Yet, the fact that deception was lauded in comparison to honesty (and in absolute terms) suggests that there is a strong association between deception and competence

in HISO occupations, even absent any comparison with LISO occupations. It is also worth noting that the majority of participants (57.2%) in this study were business students who intended to join the occupations we studied. We found no evidence that participants' intended occupation altered our results, suggesting that organizational newcomers may import these beliefs into their organizations. As noted in the General Discussion, we encourage future research into this idea.

Study 4: Deception, Hiring and HISO vs. LISO framing

Study 4 sought to further test H3 and extend Study 3's findings in three ways. First, we used an incentive-compatible hiring measure. Second, we manipulated rather than measured SO, attempting to establish its mediating role through a moderation-of-process approach (Spencer, Zanna & Fong, 2005). Third, we described the HISO or LISO features of an occupation in abstract terms rather than referring to specific occupations to provide a direct test of our theory. This study was preregistered at aspredicted.org (http://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=cq73yy).

Methods

Participants. We set the a priori target of recruiting 200 undergraduate and/or graduate business students from a Midwest U.S. university. We ultimately ended up with 210 participants (105 Men; *M* age = 32.4, *SD* = 12.9). Participants were paid $1.25 plus the chance to receive a bonus. Participants were recruited through the on-campus laboratory (which allows for walk-in participants) and through direct recruitment in the university's common areas.

Design and procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to condition in a 2(Occupational frame: HISO or LISO) x 2(Statement: Deception or honesty) between-subjects design. Specifically, participants were told that they would learn some information about another participant (the "employee") and decide whether to hire that participant to complete a "workplace task." In the HISO condition, current participants learned that the workplace task

entailed “persuading another person to make a purchase.” If hired, the employee would be evaluated “based on their ability to persuade another person to buy goods or services, and their ability to make money for themselves…” In the LISO condition, current participants learned that the task, “entails understanding the true needs of another person who is considering making a purchase.” The employee would be evaluated “based on their ability to uncover a potential customer’s true needs, and their ability to maximize the potential customer’s satisfaction…” In other words, we manipulated whether the workplace task was described in stereotypically HISO or LISO terms. The exact materials used to describe the workplace task appear in Appendix D.

Importantly, participants’ hiring choice in the workplace task was incentive-compatible. Specifically, their hiring choice influenced how many tickets they earned for a $10 raffle. If participants chose *not* to hire the employee, they would earn three lottery tickets. Alternatively, if participants chose to hire the employee, the number of lottery tickets they earned would depend on the employee’s performance: If the employee performed in the top half of all employees, they would earn six lottery tickets, but if the employee performed in the bottom half, they would earn one. We designed this task to parallel a risky hiring decision. Not hiring the employee was riskless: It yielded three lottery tickets with certainty. Hiring the employee was risky: It could lead to either more or fewer lottery tickets, depending on the employee’s performance.

After learning about the workplace task and completing a comprehension check, participants learned more about the employee they could hire. Specifically, they learned that the employee had completed a prior study involving “The Number Game,” which was identical to the deception game from Study 3. Participants had to pass a second comprehension check on “The Number Game” and then learned that the employee, acting as Sender, had sent either a deceptive (deception condition) or honest (honesty condition) message. Then, participants were

reminded about the HISO or LISO nature of the workplace task and asked: “In light of [the participant’s] behavior in The Number Game...Would you like to hire the participant you just learned about to complete the workplace task?” (Yes or No).

Additionally, participants judged the employee’s occupational competence in the workplace task using the questions from Studies 1-2 (α = .95). Participants also rated the employee’s deception using the four manipulation check items from Study 3 (α = .93). Participants concluded the study by answering some demographic questions.

Results

Predictions and analyses. The manipulation check scale was analyzed using a 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA. As preregistered, our main predictions were that perceivers would rate deceivers as more competent in, and more often hire deceivers into, the HISO- vs. the LISO-framed workplace task. As in the prior two studies, we also explored perceivers’ competence judgments about, and choices to hire, those who deceived vs. were honest. We tested the competence predictions by running a 2(Occupational frame: HISO or LISO) x 2(Statement: Deception or honesty) between-subjects ANOVA on the *Occupational Competence Scale.* Our main hypothesis test (H1) was a planned contrast between the HISO and LISO frame, within the Deception condition. To examine hiring choices, we first conducted a logistic regression using Occupational frame, Statement, and their interaction as predictors. Our main hypothesis test (H3) was a chi-square test of proportions comparing the frequency with which employees were hired into HISO vs. LISO occupations, within the Deception condition.

Manipulation check. A 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA produced a main effect of Statement, $F(1,206) = 243.44$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .54$, on perceived deception. Consistent with the intent of the manipulation, the individual who lied was seen as more deceptive (M = 5.30, SD =

1.41) than the Sender who told the truth (M = 2.21, SD = 1.47). Neither the main effect of HISO/LISO frame, $F(1,206) = 1.76$, $p = .19$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$, nor the HISO/LISO frame x Statement interaction, $F(1,206) = 1.95$, $p = .16$, $\eta_p^2 = .001$, were significant.

Competence. A 2 x 2 between-subjects ANOVA did not reveal significant main effects of Statement, $F(1,206) < .001$, $p = .99$, $\eta_p^2 < .001$, or HISO/LISO frame, $F(1,206) = 2.96$, $p = .09$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. However, it revealed a significant Occupation x Statement interaction, $F(1,206) = 25.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .11$. The interaction reflected the fact that, in support of H1, the deceptive individual was rated as more competent to complete the HISO (M = 5.60, SD = 1.43) vs. the LISO workplace task (M = 4.30, SD = 1.44); $t(105) = 4.68$, $p < .001$, $d = .91$. However, the reverse pattern held for the honest individual (M_{HISO} = 4.63, SD_{HISO} = 1.64; M_{LISO} = 5.27, SD_{HISO} = 1.02; $t(101) = 2.36$, $p = .02$, $d = .47$).

Additionally, planned comparisons indicated that honesty was considered significantly more competent than deception for the LISO workplace task, $t(106) = 3.99$, $p < .001$, $d = .78$, but deception was considered significantly more competent *than honesty* for the HISO task, $t(100) = 3.19$, $p = .002$, $d = .63$. Finally, though these analyses were not preregistered, it is worth noting that the deceptive individual was considered competent for the HISO task in absolute terms (versus the scale midpoint of 4, $t(50) = 8.03$, $p < .001$), and ratings of the individual's deception correlated negatively with their competence for the LISO task ($r = -.52$, $p < .001$) but positively with their competence for the HISO task ($r = .35$, $p < .001$). These results offer further support for H1 and H2: manipulating the level of SO associated with a task causally influences perceptions of a deceiver's competence to complete that task.

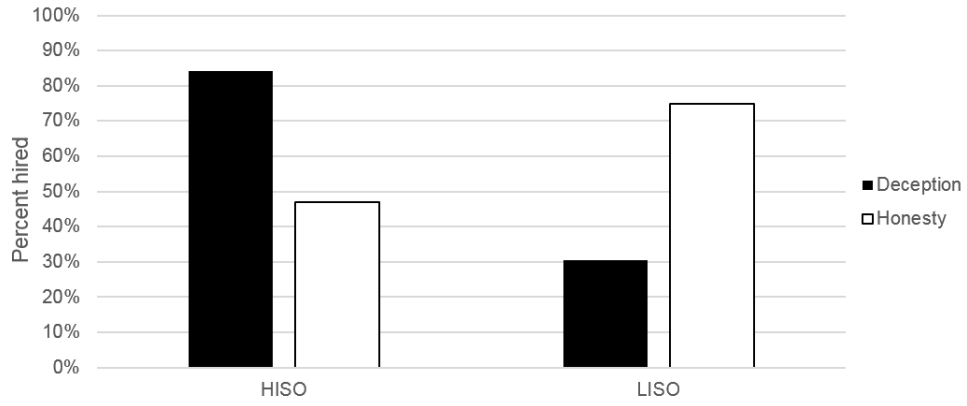
Hiring. Hiring choices followed a similar pattern (see Figure 5). There was a main effect of Statement, $B = -1.93$, $SE = .43$, Wald $\chi^2 = 19.90$, OR = .15, $p < .001$, such that participants

were less likely to hire the deceptive than the honest individual overall, as well as a main effect of Occupational Frame, B = -1.22, SE = .43, Wald χ^2 = 8.16, p < .001, OR = .30, such that participants were less likely to hire the individual into the HISO task than the LISO task overall.

Importantly, these effects were qualified by a significant Occupational Frame x Statement interaction, B = -3.73, SE = .64, Wald χ^2 = 33.58, p < .001, OR = .024: deceivers were hired significantly more often for the HISO (84.31%) than the LISO task (30.36%; χ^2 = 31.55, p < .001), but the reverse was true for honest individuals (HISO = 47.06%, LISO = 75.00%).

Additionally, planned comparisons indicated that the honest individual was hired significantly more often than the deceptive individual for the LISO workplace task (χ^2 = 21.52, p < .001), whereas the deceptive individual was hired significantly more often *than the honest individual* for the HISO workplace task (χ^2 = 15.70, p < .001). Finally, though these analyses were not preregistered, it is worth noting that the deceptive individual was hired for the HISO workplace task with greater than chance frequency (χ^2 = 13.51, p < .001), and ratings of the individual's deception were negatively associated with whether they would be hired for the LISO task (r = -.66, p < .001) but positively associated with their hiring for the HISO task (r = .33, p =.001). These results support and extend H3.

Figure 5. Study 4 Hiring Choices



Discussion

Study 4 provides causal evidence that perceivers see deception as a signal of competence in, and tend to hire deceivers for HISO rather than LISO occupations (H1 and H3). Importantly, we used an incentive-compatible hiring decision, suggesting that people do not simply associate deception with specific HISO careers (like investment banking and sales), but are actually willing to stake money on their beliefs that deceivers will perform well in HISO-framed tasks. Additionally, since we described the task in abstract HISO or LISO terms rather than referring to specific occupations, the results support our overall theory about the centrality of SO.

Notably, these results also begin to suggest an intervention that might dampen the association between deception and competence: framing occupations in a LISO vs. HISO fashion. By highlighting the LISO nature of a HISO occupation (e.g., by emphasizing that investment bankers need to satisfy long-term client needs), leaders might mitigate perceivers' tendency to laud deceivers and hire them into HISO careers, and thus stem the proliferation of deception. An exploratory study in the supplemental materials (SOM 7) provides initial evidence that framing an occupation (in this case, consulting) as LISO vs. HISO can indeed shift perceptions of deception within the occupation. We encourage future research into this idea.

General Discussion

Despite rhetoric and research suggesting that deception is vilified, examples of deception in organizations abound. The six studies in the current research highlight a potential reason why: because perceivers do not entirely disapprove of deceivers. Instead, they interpret deception as a signal that the deceiver will be competent in occupations stereotyped as HISO (e.g., sales, investment banking, advertising). Indeed, they not only anticipate that deceivers will be more competent in HISO than LISO occupations (e.g., accounting, nonprofit; H1-H2), they also regard

deceivers as more competent than *honest* individuals in HISO occupations—as well as competent in absolute terms. As one consequence, perceivers appear to hire deceivers into HISO occupations at elevated rates (H3), potentially contributing to the proliferation of deception. These findings have important theoretical and organizational implications.

Theoretical Implications

The current research extends the deception literature by adding a wrinkle to numerous findings unified in the implication that deception is vilified by those who observe it. In particular, our results respond to the call for more nuanced research on the consequences of deception (e.g., Wiltermuth et al., 2015) by suggesting that deception may send a complex mix of signals, both positive and negative. Our results could be interpreted as indicating that positive and negative signals commingle—that deception signals both general incompetence (Stellar & Willer, 2018) and high ability to engage in SO, for example. Alternatively, the results could be interpreted as indicating that the specific signals that deception sends depend on the judgment context, e.g., on whether the perceiver is assessing competence in general or in HISO occupations. Future research that teases apart these issues and others (e.g., what other signals deception sends and how occupational context might moderate them) holds significant promise.

Another theoretical contribution relates to the specific aspect of occupational context we study: the degree to which an occupation is stereotyped as reliant on Selling Orientation (SO). By introducing the idea that SO can function as an occupational in addition to a salesperson-specific stereotype and providing evidence that occupations are stereotyped as high vs. low in SO, we move toward a fine-grained understanding of the occupations in which deception is most likely to persist. In particular, our findings implicate neither single occupations like bankers (vs. non-bankers; Cohn et al., 2014) nor broad sectors of the economy like businesspeople (vs. non-

businesspeople; Kennedy & Kray, 2014). Rather, we suggest that any occupation stereotyped as HISO, and potentially any job perceived to require SO, could be vulnerable to deception-supportive beliefs and behaviors. Future research that extends our conception of SO even more broadly than we have (e.g., to encompass selling in non-economic transactions such as teachers selling ideas in class) could be particularly fruitful.

Additionally, our findings on SO highlight the fact that relatively macro-level forces like occupational stereotypes may exacerbate the many documented micro-level drivers of deception (Coleman, 1990). In other words, we suggest that widely-held stereotypes about occupations deserve attention alongside the individual forces that scholars have so persuasively documented. Investigating other macro-level forces that may coincide with occupational stereotypes (e.g., occupational logics or discourse) may present intriguing opportunities for future research.

At the broadest level, our research suggests that stereotypical beliefs about SO may influence the proliferation of deception across occupations, as deceptive individuals are actively selected for HISO occupations and jobs. Rather than shunning deceivers, as research typically suggests they should, perceivers seem to seek out deceivers to complete HISO-oriented tasks. Indeed, we suspect this selection process is but one of several processes by which deception may proliferate in HISO occupations. For example, deceptive individuals may be attracted to HISO occupations based on their perceived fit (Schneider, 1987). Even if deceptive individuals are not disproportionately drawn to HISO occupations, the activation of a HISO occupational identity could lead individuals entering these occupations to engage in heightened deception, and social forces like pluralistic ignorance (Prentice & Miller, 1993) could lead HISO practitioners to deceive to comply with the norm. Initial data, originally collected for this paper but now intended for future research, provide preliminary support for these troubling possibilities.

Organizational Implications

Collectively, we view our results as theoretically interesting and organizationally worrisome. Our findings suggest that many organizations, particularly those employing many individuals in HISO occupations, could be perpetuating low-integrity behaviors through their own cultures and stereotypes. Armed with the knowledge that deception signals competence in such occupations, these organizations may wish to explicitly deem deception incompetent. Witnessing deceptive behavior in action, they may also wish to publicly admonish it and thus reinforce the need for deception-free competence, potentially supplementing such messages with training in alternative approaches like customer orientation (CO). Finally, and especially in light of Study 4, organizations may wish to deemphasize the SO aspects of their employees' jobs, and instead reframe those jobs to be more consistent with LISO stereotypes. This reframing could help to sever the link between deception and competence.

Limitations, Moderators, and Future Directions

Our research has inevitable limitations that future research could remedy. First, we studied members of the general public as well as students, typically using experimental methods. We did not study people currently employed in HISO and LISO occupations. Although many of our student participants aspired to join these occupations, and our methods allowed us to isolate the effects of occupation in a controlled way that field studies might preclude, we recognize the tradeoffs in terms of external validity. Thus, we would welcome field studies of current occupational members, which could produce some interesting and important findings. For example, we suspect that experienced consultants might regard their occupations as more HISO than laypeople do, and we wonder whether current investment bankers (or other finance professionals) would consider their occupations less HISO. In addition, field studies could tease

apart various mechanisms, beyond hiring, that lead to the proliferation of deception in HISO occupations. Finally, they could empirically investigate the above-noted possibility that hiring deceptive individuals leads to spillover deception (i.e., deception unrelated to selling), identifying some potentially important risks of interpreting deception as competence. For all of these reasons, future research that examines occupational members in the field is welcome.

Additionally, it would be interesting for future research to examine the validity of the SO stereotype and boundaries of our effects. For example, to what extent do members of HISO occupations actually adopt a selling orientation, and how effective is it? Although these issues were outside the scope of our research and not particularly relevant to the existence or implications of the SO stereotype, they represent important open questions. It may also be fruitful to examine how various parties view deception within HISO occupations. We focused on third-party judgments, but would a victim of deception consider the deceiver competent? Probably not, as the deceiver's low integrity would likely loom larger. What about another individual complicit in a focal individual's deception? We suspect that a co-conspirator might consider deception especially competent, given their need for cognitive consistency.

Additionally, we have focused on competence as manifested in specific occupational roles, but we wonder whether deception, to the extent it successfully manipulates another person's beliefs, might signal some level of competence in general. Although this possibility is at-odds with Stellar and Willer's (2018) research on incompetence, our results suggest that the link between deception and other forms of competence generally deserves a deeper look.

Finally, we wonder whether prosocial deception—deception intended to benefit the recipient rather than the self (Levine & Schweitzer, 2014, 2015)—might seem more occupationally competent in LISO than HISO occupations. Consider physicians who deceptively

tell patients that, “It won’t hurt a bit.” Future research could usefully examine whether the effect might flip such that benevolent deception signals competence in LISO occupations like physician. We believe that research into these and additional issues at the nexus of deception and competence could seed many years of interesting research.

Conclusion

The current research suggests that deception is not universally vilified. The same conduct seen as unethical and incompetent in LISO occupations (and society at-large) appears to function as a sign of occupational competence in HISO occupations, unethical signals notwithstanding. We hope these findings begin to explain the persistence of deception, charting a path that eventually severs the link between deception and competence.

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Appendix A: *SO Scale*

- People in this occupation spend much of their time convincing others to make a purchase
- This occupation involves getting people to buy things
- Persuading people to make a purchase is a key component of this job
- Successful members of this occupation achieve outcomes that benefit themselves and their own organization more than outcomes that benefit others
- Getting people to do things that aren't really in their own interest is a key component of this job
- The primary goal of people in this occupation is to make as much money as possible for their organizations and themselves
- Success at work in this occupation depends on how people present information to others more than it depends on the accuracy of that information

In Pilot Study A, participants were asked to, "Please rate the extent to which these statements describe each of the following occupations" (1 = Above statements do not describe this occupation well, 5 = Above statements do describe this statement well).

In Pilot Study B, participants were prompted to, "Please think very carefully about the occupation of [Occupation]. To what extent do you agree that…" (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree).

In Studies 1 and 2, participants answered questions about how these items applied to the practitioner (see Appendix B).

Appendix B: Study 1 Scenario and Questions

Scenario
Julie is [a/an occupation]. She works at a large [type of occupation] firm in California. Last week, Julie went on a work-related trip to New York City. Julie's organization reimburses her for travel, so she keeps track of her expenses and saves her receipts. When she returned from the trip and began filling out her expense report, Julie realized that the cab driver who drove her from the airport to the meeting gave her a blank receipt. Thus, Julie has to fill it out herself before submitting it for reimbursement.

Julie paid cash and thus can't check the cost of the cab ride. But she seems to recall that it cost $40. On her expense report, Julie indicates that the cab ride cost $50.The next week, Julie receives a reimbursement for her travels, including $50 for this cab ride.

Selling Orientation Questions
All questions were measured using 5-point rating scales, ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 5 = "Strongly agree."

- Julie spends much of her time convincing others to make a purchase
- Julie's occupation involves getting people to buy things
- Persuading people to make a purchase is a key component of Julie's job
- Successful members of Julie's occupation achieve outcomes that benefit themselves and their own organization more than outcomes that benefit others
- Getting people to do things that aren't really in their own interest is a key component of Julie's job
- Julie's primary goal as an [occupation] is to make as much money as possible for her organization and herself
- Julie's success at work depends on how she presents information to others more than it depends on the accuracy of that information

Competence Questions
All questions were measured using 7-point rating scales, ranging from 1 = "Strongly disagree" to 7 = "Strongly agree."

- Julie will be competent in her career as [a/an occupation].
- Julie will be capable in her career as [a/an occupation].
- Julie will be skillful in her career as [a/an occupation].
- Julie will be successful in her career as [a/an occupation].
- Julie will do what it takes to get her job done as [a/an occupation].
- Julie will make a good [occupation].

Appendix C: Study 2 Scenario

In a previous job, James worked for a boss who loved sailing. James's boss frequently commented on his love for sailing. Unbeknownst to his boss, James did not like sailing.

When James and his boss were meeting one day, James's boss asked him whether he liked sailing. James [said that he did / said that he did not / answered]. The conversation then moved to another topic.

Appendix D: Study 4 Stimuli

In this study, you will have the opportunity to hire another participant to complete a workplace task. This task entails [persuading another person to make a purchase / understanding the true needs of another person who is considering making a purchase].

We will recruit at least 50 participants to complete the workplace task, and we will have a panel of judges rate the performance of each participant based on their ability to [persuade another person to buy goods or services / uncover a potential customer's true needs], and their ability to [make money for themselves (even if that does not maximize the potential customer's satisfaction) / maximize the potential customer's satisfaction (even if that does not result in a sale).]
=

You now have the opportunity to hire this participant to complete a **workplace task**, which will require the participant to [persuade a potential customer to make a purchase, in order to make as much money as possible for themself / uncover a potential customer's true needs, in order to maximize that person's satisfaction].