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RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Faking in Self-Report Personality Scales: A Qualitative Analysis and Taxonomy of the Behaviors That Constitute Faking Strategies

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ABSTRACT

Faking in self-report personality scales (SRPSs) is not sufficiently understood. This limits its detection and prevention. Here, we introduce a taxonomy of faking behaviors that constitute faking strategies in SRPSs, reflecting the stages (comprehension, retrieval, judgment, and response) of the general response process model (GRPM). We reanalyzed data from two studies investigating the faking of high and low scores on Extraversion (E) and Need for Cognition (NFC) scales (Data Set 1; $N = 305$) or on an E scale (Data Set 2; $N = 251$). Participants were asked to explain exactly what they did to fake, and their responses ($N = 533$) were examined via a qualitative content analysis. The resulting taxonomy included 22 global and 13 specific behaviors that (in combination) constitute faking strategies in SRPSs. We organized the behaviors into four clusters along the stages of the GRPM. The behaviors held irrespective of the construct (E or NFC), and with two exceptions, also irrespective of the data set (Data Sets 1 or 2). Eight exceptions concerning faking direction (high or low) indicate direction-specific differences in faking behaviors. Respondents reported using not only different faking behaviors (e.g., role-playing, behaviors to avoid being detected) but also multiple combinations thereof. The suggested taxonomy is necessarily limited to the specified context, and, thus, additional faking behaviors are possible. To fully understand faking, further research in other contexts should be conducted to complement the taxonomy. Still, the complexity shown here explains why adequate detection and prevention of faking in SRPSs is so challenging.

Faking has been defined as “... a response set aimed at providing a portrayal of the self that helps a person to achieve personal goals. Faking occurs when this response set is activated by situational demands and person characteristics to produce systematic differences in test scores that are not caused by the attribute of interest” (Ziegler et al. 2012, p. 8). The extent to which respondents fake differs across faking conditions, such as the faking direction (e.g., faking high scores vs. faking low scores) and the construct being faked (meta-analysis: Birkeland

et al. 2006), forming a certain faking context. Thus, faking is a complex phenomenon that varies across contexts (e.g., Bensch et al. 2019; Röhner, Thoss, and Schütz 2022).

Substantial literature has documented the negative effects of faking (e.g., changes in mean scores, standard deviations, rank orders, reliability, and construct-related validity), and researchers agree that faking is a serious problem in assessment, that needs to be addressed (e.g., Salgado 2016; for an overview,

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Summary

- The actual behaviors underlying faking in SRPSs are still not well understood, which limits faking detection and prevention.
- Conducting a qualitative analysis, we introduce a taxonomy of behaviors that constitute faking strategies in SRPSs and reflect the GRPM stages.
- Analyzing 533 responses from participants asked to report on their faking behaviors, we identified 22 global and 13 specific behaviors in four clusters.
- Highlighting the complexity of faking, respondents reported that they not only used different behaviors but also multiple combinations thereof.
- The behaviors largely held across conditions (e.g., faking on E and NFC) with some differences that were primarily associated with faking direction; thus, the results can be understood as a map to build upon.

see Ziegler et al. 2012). Self-report personality scales (i.e., SRPSs) with Likert-type items are especially prone to faking. These measurement procedures are used frequently and respondents can easily infer their associated assessment goals, which increases their fakeability (e.g., Fuechtenhans and Brown 2022; Salgado 2016).

Several approaches for the detection (e.g., *implementing scales that aim to measure the tendency to create a desired impression*: Paulhus 2002; but cf. Lanz, Thielmann, and Gerpott 2022; *using machine-learning algorithms*: Calanna et al. 2020; Röhner, Thoss, and Schütz 2022; *inspecting reaction times*: Holden and Lambert 2015; but cf. Röhner and Holden 2022) and prevention of faking in SRPSs (e.g., *using warnings*: Landers, Sackett, and Tuzinski 2011; but cf. Robson, Jones, and Abraham 2007; *using forced-choice formats*: Cao and Drasgow 2019; but cf. Martínez and Salgado 2021; *using “fake-resistant” measures*: LeBreton et al. 2007; but Röhner and Ewers 2016; or *using proctored testing*: Karim, Kaminsky, and Behrend 2014; but cf. Beaty et al. 2011) have been suggested.

Nevertheless, researchers have not yet succeeded in finding valid ways to detect or prevent faking with high accuracy (e.g., Bill and Melchers 2022), even though they have been attempting to do so for over 100 years (Sackett et al. 2017). There are at least two reasons why these ventures have failed to succeed. First, effectively detecting or preventing faking requires a comprehensive understanding of the manifoldness of the behaviors involved. Although crucial, knowledge about what exactly respondents do to fake remains limited, as we will explain below. However, failing to address the complexity of these behaviors would threaten efforts to detect and prevent them. Second, faking depends on the context (e.g., Bensch et al. 2019), and faking behaviors may differ between conditions (e.g., the faking direction: faking high scores vs. faking low scores; Röhner, Thoss, and Schütz 2022). As a result, methods that are effective for detecting or preventing faking in one condition might fail in another. Therefore, a comprehensive overview of individual faking behaviors across conditions in SRPSs is essential.

Here, we sought to gain deeper insights into the complexity of these behaviors by conducting a qualitative analysis of respondents' reports on the various faking behaviors they stated to have implemented while they were faking high scores or faking low scores on two SRPSs. We sorted these behaviors along the general response process model (GRPM; see the section below) because it provides a useful theoretical framework for the faking process in SRPSs.

1 | Positioning Faking in SRPSs in the GRPM

The GRPM describes the general process by which participants respond to SRPSs items. On the basis of a literature review, Krosnick (1999) suggested that the GRPM comprises four stages: *comprehension*, *retrieval*, *judgment*, and *mapping* (Figure 1). According to that model, respondents encode an item and form a mental representation of its content (comprehension stage). They then recall information that is relevant to the item content (retrieval stage). They compare the information with their mental representation of the item (judgment stage). Finally, they project the respective result onto the rating scale (mapping stage). Krosnick (1999) distinguished between *optimizing* (i.e., when respondents are motivated to answer attentively and comply with the instructions) and *satisficing* (i.e., when respondents do not answer attentively).

Tourangeau and Rasinski (1988) suggested a similar GRPM but assumed that the last stage includes more than just mapping and therefore called this stage *response*. Then they distinguished between two steps in the last stage and called these two steps mapping and editing (Figure 1). Whereas mapping is in line with what Krosnick (1999) described, editing reflects response distortions, such as faking in SRPSs. According to this view, faking would be related only to the editing component of this last stage and not to any other stage.

However, Ziegler (2011) showed in their study that *all four stages of the GRPM* are affected by faking and that respondents' motives and personality moderate these faking attempts in SRPSs. For example, they found that narcissism was related to faking in the last stage, but self-deception was related to faking in earlier stages. Thus, Ziegler (2011) found that faking is not restricted to the last stage as previously assumed (e.g., Tourangeau and Rasinski 1988).

2 | What Do We Know About Faking Behaviors in SRPSs So Far?

2.1 | Insights From Theoretical Models

Knowledge about possible faking behaviors in SRPSs is partly based on theoretical models of the faking process (e.g., Goffin and Boyd 2009; Tett and Simonet 2011). Although the specific content varies across faking models, a common feature of these models is that faking includes the components of ability, motivation, and opportunity to fake (see also Ellingson and McFarland 2011). Nevertheless, it is still unclear whether faking behaviors in SRPSs that have been suggested theoretically are

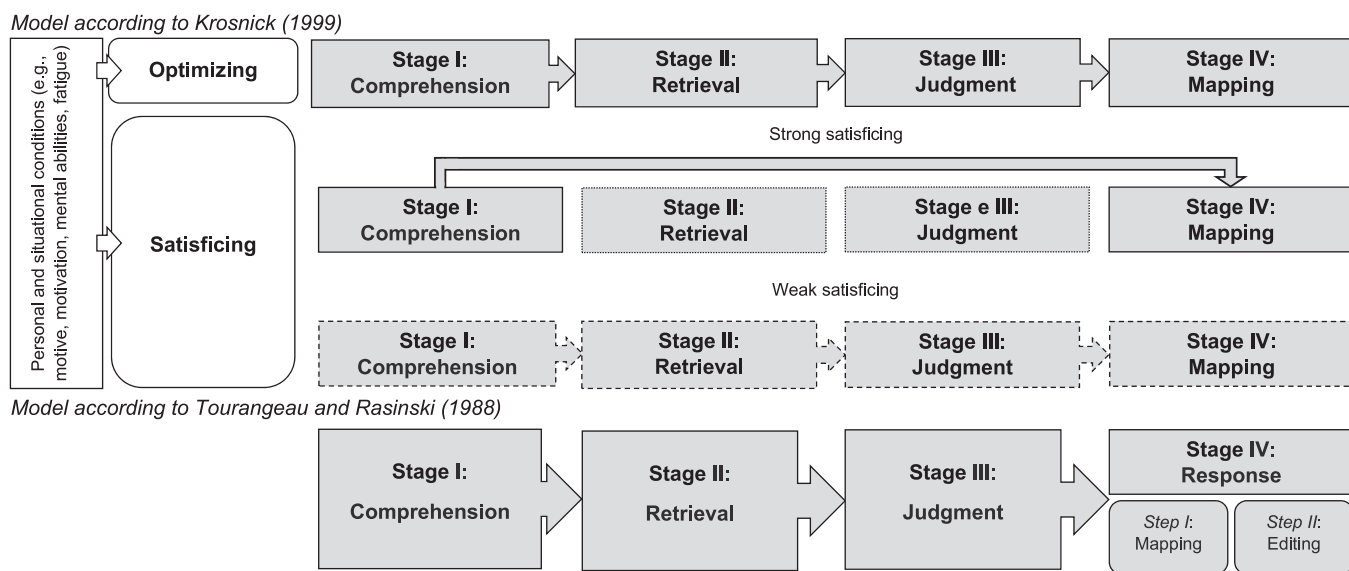


FIGURE 1 | General response process model. Stages of the GRPM are presented in the gray boxes in bold typeface. In the model by Tourangeau and Rasinski (1988), the same stages as in the model by Krosnick (1999) were suggested, except for the fact that Tourangeau and Rasinski (1988) suggested two steps within stage IV (i.e., mapping and editing) and called the stage “response” accordingly.

actually applied, whether there are faking behaviors in SRPSs that are so far not considered, whether there are combinations of faking behaviors in SRPSs, or whether faking behaviors are generalizable (e.g., with respect to faking direction, Bensch et al. 2019; or the to-be-faked construct, Birkeland et al. 2006).

2.2 | Indications From Quantitative Analyses

Researchers have also used quantitative analyses to identify faking behaviors in SRPSs, typically by comparing response patterns between faked and nonfaked responses. This approach has offered several insights indicating that faking behaviors may vary substantially. Due to space restrictions, we only describe a few examples hereafter. A recent study revealed that faking depends on faking direction (e.g., Bensch et al. 2019). Other studies have found evidence that respondents give blatant and extreme answers when faking (Landers, Sackett, and Tuzinski 2011; Levashina et al. 2014). Using mixed-model item response theory, Zickar, Gibby and Robie (2004) identified classes of respondents who fake differently (e.g., slight faking and extreme faking).

However, although comparing response patterns between faked and nonfaked responses offers valuable insights, the resulting knowledge might be limited, as variations in response patterns do not necessarily provide information about the actual underlying behavior. Stated differently, although the effects (e.g., changed response patterns) might be identical, the mechanisms might differ. For example, faking behaviors might include not only behaviors geared toward faking but also behaviors geared toward avoiding detection (Fiedler and Bluemke 2005). Moreover, many of the quantitative approaches model faking in SRPSs as one variable (e.g., one latent factor), thus rendering it difficult to identify particular faking behaviors, especially if they are not used by all respondents and if they occur in different combinations.

2.3 | Indications From Qualitative Analyses

A more straightforward way to understand respondents' behaviors is to let respondents speak for themselves (e.g., Schütz and DePaulo 1996), ask them what they did to fake, and analyze their responses (i.e., qualitative data). So far, only a few studies have taken on the challenge to analyze faking in SRPSs on this basis. Robie, Brown, and Beaty (2007) were the first to empirically demonstrate respondents' willingness to fake in SRPSs, but they did not focus on the respective behaviors. König, Merz, and Trauffer (2012) reported respondents' assumptions about what they thought might be relevant for researchers when interpreting their SRPSs responses (consistency of responses, endorsement of middle vs. extreme responses, and a certain profile), but they did not focus on faking behaviors. Still, their finding that respondents have an idea about what is relevant to make a *credible impression* indicates that antidetection efforts may be an integral component of faking. Ziegler (2011) showed that faking in SRPSs affects all stages of the GRPM. Regarding faking behaviors, Ziegler found that when respondents are faking, they evaluate each item with regard to its importance for reaching their faking goal, and they fake only on the items they consider to be relevant. However, their focus was on the process in general and on the variables that potentially influence such a general faking process. For example, Ziegler demonstrated that respondents' motives and personality affect the general faking process in SRPSs at several stages of the GRPM. Although Ziegler (2011) focused on the GRPM and suggested that individual differences might moderate this general process, they did not investigate the *manifoldness* of actual faking behaviors.¹ Hauenstein et al. (2017) investigated utterances about several types of processing (i.e., behavioral-oriented processing, semantic analysis of item content, trait-oriented processing, and conditional processing) under instructions to “fake good” in SRPSs. They revealed increased semantic processing and extreme responses under faking. Furthermore, their results pointed to the relevance of item desirability and

indicated that faking behavior differs across faking contexts. However, their focus was not to assess faking behaviors with respect to the GRPM. Last but not least, Fuechtenhans and Brown (2022) investigated faking behavior and revealed that respondents activated information about “a stereotypical good worker,” that some respondents retrieved past experiences whereas others did not, that respondents selected items on the basis of their desirability, and that they tried to avoid looking bad. However, Fuechtenhans and Brown (2022) focused on faking in multidimensional forced-choice (MFC) formats and not in SRPSs.

3 | Finding Common Ground

Although previous research has already identified several faking behaviors in SRPSs, the *complexity* of faking behaviors that respondents use in these measures, the relationships between these behaviors, and the relationships with the *response process* that underlies faking in SRPSs are still largely unidentified for several reasons. First, previous studies may have overlooked some faking behaviors in SRPSs. For example, it is likely that respondents not only fake but also try to avoid being detected as fakers. Thus, a relevant component of faking behaviors in SRPSs should concern efforts aimed at *antidetecion*. In addition, although previous research has found certain faking behaviors in SRPSs, researchers have not integrated these behaviors into a respective taxonomy, even though such a taxonomy would be useful for research and applications. Second, combinations of faking behaviors in SRPSs are largely uninvestigated, although it is likely that respondents combine several behaviors (e.g., behaviors to increase their chances of faking successfully and behaviors to avoid obvious faking patterns). Third, faking conditions shape faking in SRPSs, and thus, a faking behavior that has been found in a certain condition may not necessarily be applied in another condition. Most studies have not investigated the generalizability of their results concerning faking directions, constructs, and data sets. Also, the sample sizes in some studies were quite small, so they were somewhat limited in mapping the faking behaviors that were used less frequently.

4 | The Present Study

The present study applied a qualitative content analysis to investigate 533 respondents' reports of how they faked in SRPSs with Likert-type items with respect to two faking directions, two constructs, and two data sets to aid the understanding of the complexity of faking behaviors in SRPSs in relation to the underlying GRPM (Krosnick 1999; Tourangeau and Rasinski 1988). Thus, we extended previous research on faking in the GRPM framework in several ways.

First, we aimed to derive a taxonomy of faking behaviors in SRPSs that were reported by respondents and to sort these behaviors along the four stages of the GRPM. Second, we aimed to identify the combinations of these faking behaviors in SRPSs and describe them. Thus, the qualitative content analysis approach is inductive in that we coded participants' reports of

how they faked in SRPSs. It is also deductive in that we checked whether we could relate the respective faking behaviors in SRPSs to the GRPM. Furthermore, we aimed to test the generalizability of our results concerning faking directions, constructs, and data sets. To do so, we investigated whether the taxonomy of reported faking behaviors in SRPSs could be applied to the faking of high scores as well as to the faking of low scores (third), whether it could be applied to two different constructs that had to be faked (fourth), and whether the results could be cross-validated with a second independent data set (fifth).

Our research questions were as follows:

R1: *What are the faking behaviors in SRPSs reported by respondents, and how can they be sorted along the stages of the GRPM?*

R2: *How are these faking behaviors in SRPSs combined?*

R3: *Can the resulting taxonomy of the respective faking behaviors in SRPSs be applied to different faking directions (the faking of high scores vs. the faking of low scores)?*

R4: *Can the resulting taxonomy of the respective faking behaviors in SRPSs be applied to different constructs (Extraversion [E] vs. Need for Cognition [NFC])?*

R5: *Can the resulting taxonomy of the respective faking behaviors in SRPSs be found in a second independent sample (Data Set 1 vs. Data Set 2)?*

5 | Methods

We followed the Journal Article Reporting Standards (JARS) to ensure maximal transparency of our data and methods. Due to space restrictions, some of them are referred to in footnotes.

5.1 | Research Design Overview and Recruitment Process

5.1.1 | Procedures Followed in the Original Studies

In Data Set 1, participants worked on an E scale and a NFC scale. In Data Set 2, participants worked on an E scale. In each data set, participants worked on a baseline assessment and afterwards were randomly assigned to one of the following conditions: faking high scores, faking low scores, or working under the measures' standard instructions (i.e., control condition).² The faking instructions are in line with previous research (e.g., McDaniel et al. 2009; Röhner and Holden 2022) and refer to hypothetical personnel selection scenarios. Participants were provided with information about the constructs that were assessed (E or NFC). They were given a brief description of the construct and some examples of how respondents with high versus low scores on the SRPSs would describe themselves.³ The detailed faking instructions, including the description of the constructs and the respective examples, can be found in the

Supplement on the OSF (https://osf.io/2sg86/?view_only=841d1c66db164ac1a391dedf180e32a5). Due to space restrictions, we describe them here in an abbreviated form. In the instructions for faking high scores, participants were asked to imagine they had been unemployed for 1 year and had just been given the opportunity to apply for a very attractive job. They were asked to fake high on E (or NFC) to maximize their chances of being offered the job. The instructions for faking low scores included the description of a very unattractive job. To avoid being offered the job, participants were asked to fake low on E (or NFC). Participants were not provided with incentives to fake.

Afterwards, participants in the faking conditions were asked to respond to the question “What did you do to fake on the questionnaire?” They were asked to write down their responses in an open-ended response format. In Data Set 1, they were asked to respond to the question separately for the E scale and the NFC scale.

5.1.2 | To-Be-Faked Measures in the Original Studies

5.1.2.1 | E Scale. Participants worked on the respective scale from the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (Borkenau and Ostendorf 2008; English version: Costa and McCrae 1992). This scale consists of 12 items that are answered on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The scale characteristics and Cronbach's α reliability at the baseline assessment (Supporting Information S1: Table S1) were comparable to Borkenau and Ostendorf's (2008) values of $M = 28.38$, $SD = 6.70$, and $\alpha = 0.80$. Faking led to typical effects (e.g., Salgado 2016): The means changed in line with the faking directions, and the standard deviations and internal consistencies increased.

5.1.2.2 | NFC Scale. Participants worked on the German adaptation of the 16-item short version of the NFC scale (Bless et al. 1994; English version: Cacioppo and Petty 1982). The scale consists of 16 items that are answered on a 7-point scale ranging from -3 (*strongly disagree*) to $+3$ (*strongly agree*). The scale characteristics and reliability at the baseline assessment (Supporting Information S1: Table S1) were comparable to Fleischhauer et al.'s (2010) values of $M = 15.28$, $SD = 11.14$, and $\alpha = 0.84$. Faking led to typical effects (e.g., Salgado 2016): The means changed in line with the faking directions, and the standard deviations and internal consistency score increased.

5.2 | Selection of Data

We reanalyzed two data sets ($N = 588$) that had been collected with student samples in exchange for partial course credit (Data Set 1: $n = 318$ and Data Set 2: $n = 270$).⁴ These data sets were used for several reasons. First, we were interested in investigating participants' faking behaviors that they used naively.⁵ Thus, we used data sets in which participants had been asked to fake without recommending a particular strategy to them⁶ (e.g., Röhner and Holden 2022). Second, different from previous research (e.g., Ziegler 2011), participants were not warned

about faking detection because such warnings could change respondents' faking (e.g., by attenuating faking; Li et al. 2022). Also, with most measures, valid faking detection is not yet possible, and thus, warning participants that faking can be detected (without having valid faking indicators) would have been problematic from an ethical perspective. For both reasons, it was necessary for participants not to be warned. Third, we were interested in investigating faking on SRPSs with Likert-type items, because they are especially susceptible to faking (e.g., Fuechtenhans and Brown 2022; Salgado 2016). Fourth, we needed data sets that assessed faking on two personality constructs (E and NFC), which was a necessary precondition for comparing faking behaviors across SRPSs. E was included because of its frequent use in previous faking research (McDaniel et al. 2009; Steffens 2004). In contrast, NFC was included because this construct has been only sparsely examined in faking research (Röhner and Holden 2022), but it is a construct that may be particularly likely to inspire respondents to answer in a manner that may impress others (Lins de Holanda Coelho, Hanel, and Wolf 2020). Thus, by using these constructs, we hoped to cover a large span of faking behaviors. Fifth, to demonstrate the generalizability of the results concerning faking directions, constructs, and data sets, we needed data sets in which high and low scores were faked, data sets that included faking on different constructs, and data sets with independent samples. The described data sets matched these criteria.

5.3 | Data Preparation and Data Composition

5.3.1 | Data Preparation

We excluded data from a total of 45 participants who met one of the following criteria Supporting Information S1: Table S2). First, we excluded data from participants who did not reply to the question “What did you do to fake on the questionnaire?” or those who answered that they did nothing to fake. Second, we excluded data from participants whose responses could not be clearly interpreted (e.g., “Reading instructions carefully”). Third, we excluded data from participants whose responses indicated that they had not understood the instructions (e.g., “I gave the responses associated with *high* Extraversion scores” when they were asked to fake low). Fourth, for reasons of comparability, for the analyses in Data Set 1, if one of the abovementioned criteria was met when a participant was asked to fake on E, we also excluded that participant's data when they were asked to fake on NFC (and vice versa).

5.3.2 | Data Composition

The remaining sample size was $N = 543$ ($n = 292$ in Data Set 1 and $n = 251$ in Data Set 2), and we used these data for the manipulation checks. Data Set 1 comprised a total of 292 participants (all students; 222 women, 69 men, 1 diverse/no response; average age: 22.41 years, $SD = 4.11$; faking high condition: 93 participants, control condition: 106 participants, faking low condition: 93 participants), and Data Set 2 comprised 251 participants (all students; 183 women, 68 men; average age:

22.10 years, $SD = 4.75$; faking high condition: 79 participants, control condition: 90 participants, faking low condition: 82 participants).

For the qualitative content analysis, participants in the control condition of both Data Sets ($n = 196$) were excluded. Thus, the remaining sample size for these analyses was $N = 360$ participants from the faking conditions, and from them, a total of 533 participant responses were collected. In Data Set 1, 186 responses were related to E (93 faking high vs. 93 faking low) and 186 to NFC (93 faking high vs. 93 faking low). In Data Set 2, 161 responses were related to E (79 faking high vs. 82 faking low).

5.4 | Overview on Analyses

We⁷ used quantitative and qualitative data and performed quantitative and qualitative data analyses. We applied quantitative analyses (robust ANCOVAs) to the SRPSs scores (participants' responses on the E and NFC scales) to check whether participants in the faking conditions were motivated and able to fake on all the measures (manipulation check). To derive a taxonomy of faking behaviors in SRPSs organized along the four stages of the GRPM, we used participants' explanations of how they faked (qualitative data) and analyzed their responses with a qualitative approach (qualitative content analysis). To determine whether our taxonomy could be generalized with respect to faking directions, constructs, and data sets, we used a binary coding system (1 = *faking behavior was reported*, 0 = *faking behavior was not reported*) to quantitatively assess the prevalence of each identified faking behavior. This approach was grounded in the qualitative data derived from participants' descriptions of how they faked (qualitative data). We then applied Fisher's exact tests (quantitative analyses) to statistically analyze these occurrences.

5.5 | Analytical Approach

5.5.1 | Manipulation Check

We computed robust ANCOVAs (Wilcox 2005) on each measure's score to check for whether participants in the faking conditions were motivated and able to fake and whether their scores still differed when the baseline scores were controlled for (Vickers and Altman 2001). The significant differences between trimmed means in all design points revealed that this requirement was met (Supporting Information S1: Table S3).

5.5.2 | Qualitative Content Analysis

5.5.2.1 | General Procedure. We conducted a qualitative content analysis (Mayring 2008; Mayring and Fenzl 2014)⁸ to analyze the faking behaviors reported by respondents in the faking conditions with respect to the stages of the GRPM. Content analysis is defined as “[...] any technique for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying specified characteristics of messages” (Holsti 1968, p. 601). The goal

is to reduce a large amount of qualitative data into representative content categories.

We allowed the coding categories to emerge from the data rather than imposing categories a priori, as little theory currently exists about faking behaviors in SRPSs, and we wanted to avoid overlooking any faking behaviors. The unit of analysis was the written description of participants' faking behavior. To this end, we coded participants' responses to the question: “What did you do to fake on the questionnaire?”

After excluding participants on the basis of the criteria described above, we coded the 533 responses given by participants in the faking conditions.⁹ The authors independently read each response and identified whether the faking behavior was present (i.e., coded 1) or not (i.e., coded 0). Responses that included more than one faking behavior were given a code of 1 for each faking behavior that was reported. We met regularly to review, discuss, and resolve discrepancies across the coded faking behaviors until we agreed on how to code all of the 533 responses. Example quotes that demonstrate the resulting taxonomy of reported faking behaviors in SRPSs can be found in Table 1. The coding system can be found in Supporting Information (Supporting Information S1: Table S4).

5.5.2.2 | Our Terminology: Clusters, Global Behaviors, and Specific Behaviors. To organize the reported faking behaviors, we clustered and labeled them. We identified several *global behaviors*. In some cases, these global behaviors could be further differentiated into *specific behaviors*. The behaviors built *clusters* that served different goals (Figure 2). To give an example: The global behavior “Adapting answers to item content and direction” includes two specific behaviors (“Agreeing with items that match the desired impression” and “Disagreeing with items that contradict the desired impression”). The global behavior (“Adapting answers to item content and direction”) and other global behaviors (e.g., “Answering the opposite”) together built a cluster that we termed “Adjustment of response behavior.”

Clusters, global behaviors, and specific behaviors occurred in more than one stage of the GRPM (Figure 2). Also, several combinations of these elements were found across respondents. Thus, respondents' faking strategies could be composed of several global and specific behaviors in various clusters.

5.5.3 | Fisher's Exact Test

The suggested taxonomy of reported faking behaviors in SRPSs includes global behaviors and specific behaviors that are organized into clusters. We compared the occurrence of the global behaviors and specific behaviors (i.e., whether the faking behavior was present [1] or not [0]) in the clusters with Fisher's exact tests to analyze whether the same global behaviors and specific behaviors could be found irrespective of faking direction, to-be-faked construct, and sample. The independent variables were faking direction (high vs. low), to-be-faked construct (E vs. NFC), and Data Set (1 vs. 2). The

TABLE 1 | Example quotes demonstrating the taxonomy of faking behaviors in self-reported personality scales sorted along the four stages of the general response process model.

Stages and clusters	Global behaviors	Specific behaviors	Example quote	Construct
<i>Comprehension and retrieval</i> Test-cracking	Interpreting the construct	With item meanings	“On the items that supposedly measured high Extraversion, [...], and on the ones [items] that supposedly measured low Extraversion, [...].”	E
		Without item meanings	“On items associated with high NFC, [...]. On items that were associated with low NFC, [...].” “[...] sociable, active [...].” “[...] likes to think.”	NFC E NFC
<i>Retrieval, judgment, and response</i> Retrieving information beyond the instructions and choosing responses accordingly	Role-playing	Using a prototype as a template	“Imagined how a reserved, rather shy person would answer, or what would be preferred by that person in the respective situation.” “Imagined how a person who is (extremely) avoidant in a cognitive manner would answer, [...].”	E NFC
		Using an ideal/an undesirable employee for the position in question as a template	“[...], except for those [items] that I thought employers would frown upon if I chose ‘strongly agree’ as an answer.” “[...] especially with regard to the personnel selection scenario (i.e., what answers would strike the recruiter as negative).”	E NFC
		Using a faker as a template	“I put myself in the shoes of a person who wants to score low to avoid getting offered this job [...].” “I put myself in the shoes of the person who was described.”	E NFC
	Recalling and using one’s own experiences/characteristics as a guideline	Referring to one’s own experiences/characteristics	“I tried to remember the most difficult moment in my life when I really needed money and time, with the goal that this memory would motivate me [...].” “I based my responses on my own experiences.”	E NFC
		Ignoring one’s own experiences/characteristics	“[...] ignored my own personal attitudes/characteristics.” —	E NFC
	Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it	—	“Ticked everything with the goal of achieving the desired score.”	E

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Stages and clusters	Global behaviors	Specific behaviors	Example quote	Construct
<i>Judgment and response</i>				
Adjusting response behavior	Adapting answers to item content and direction	Agreeing with items that match the desired impression	“[...] to answer the questions in a way that I consider myself to be in the medium to low range in terms of Need for Cognition.” Faking high scores: “Strongly agreed with statements that indicated Extraversion.” Faking low scores: “[...] agreed with statements that indicated Introversion [low Extraversion].” Faking high scores: “Strongly agreed with items that obviously asked about Need for Cognition.” Faking low scores: “Agreed with items that indicated low Need for Cognition.” Faking high scores: “Strongly disagreed with statements that indicated Introversion.” Faking low scores: “Disagreed with the ones [statements] that indicated high Extraversion.” Faking high scores: “Strongly disagreed with items that referred to low scores on Need for Cognition.” Faking low scores: “I tried to respond to items indicating high Need for Cognition by choosing ‘disagree.’”	NFC E NFC E NFC
	Making sure to fake strongly enough	Choosing extreme responses on all items	“I always chose the extreme responses: ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘strongly agree’ [...].” “I always chose extreme response options (−3 & +3).”	E NFC
	Answering the opposite	Avoiding neutral responses	“[...] I focused on never ticking the middle, [...].” “[...] no neutral responses [...].” “Ticked answers that were exactly the opposite of Extraversion.”	E NFC E
	Responding to item desirability/nondesirability	—	“[...] I answered the opposite.” “[...] chose options between [...] with positively connoted items.” “Ticked negative items.”	NFC E NFC

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Stages and clusters	Global behaviors	Specific behaviors	Example quote	Construct
	Answering in an authentic fashion	—	“ <u>Answered honestly</u> because I am an [...] myself.”	E
	Repeatedly correcting one’s own responses	—	“Chose authentic responses on those items [...] that for me, subjectively represent low NFC behavior.”	NFC
	Increasing values toward the desired direction	—	“Tried to present myself as insecurely as possible, e.g., <u>often corrected answers</u> , [...].” “ <u>Deliberately chose wrong answers</u> , showed <u>disinterest and ignorance in responding correctly</u> .”	E NFC
	Responding randomly	—	“I tried to answer as I normally would but <u>ticked a response option that was more forward Extraversion for every second or third question</u> .” “Thereby, <u>I deliberately shifted the responses to display low Need for Cognition</u> .”	E NFC
Avoiding being detected as a faker	Strategically using extreme responses	Giving extreme responses on selected items only	“On items that I considered to be very central to the construct of Introversion, I <u>always answered with extremes</u> [...].” “For questions that I considered to be highly relevant for faking, I chose <u>extreme responses</u> [...].”	E NFC
Trying to avoid excessive faking		Avoiding extreme responses	“I <u>did not use extreme responses</u> .” “I <u>tried to avoid ticking extreme responses</u> , [...].” “[...] I made sure <u>not to appear too extreme but to find a good balance</u> .”	E NFC E
Alternating between desired responses			“I tried to simulate a tendency [...], without <u>overdoing it, to avoid the impression of faking</u> .” “For items measuring Extraversion, I <u>responded with ‘agree’ to ‘strongly agree’</u> [...].” “For items that were associated with high NFC, I <u>ticked high values, i.e., 1 – 3</u> [...].”	E NFC

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

Stages and clusters	Global behaviors	Specific behaviors	Example quote	Construct
	Including neutral responses	—	“For questions about Extraversion [...], <u>I chose more [...]</u> neutral ratings to appear more authentic.”	E
	Striving for consistency	—	“For less relevant questions, I chose neutral responses [...].” “ <u>[...], tried to be consistent between responses, for example, I don't like talking to other people... and I don't like being the center of attention.</u> ” “Balancing the opposing poles [...].”	NFC
	Avoiding obvious/stable response patterns	—	“ <u>[...] partial agreement for questions that were related to mood, etc., to not only select rejection and, thus, appear as realistic as possible.</u> ” “ <u>Avoided obvious response patterns to avoid being detected as a faker.</u> ”	E NFC
	Specifically attending to “control” items	—	“ <u>On an item that was ambiguous, I answered neutrally. Could have been a response tendency item.</u> ”	E
	Responding quickly	—	“ <u>Responded quickly [...].</u> ” “ <u>Tried to come up with [...] answers as quickly as possible.</u> ”	NFC E NFC
	Adjusting faking strategies while faking	—	“ <u>First used only [...]</u> - but that would have been too conspicuous if I continued that way.” “ <u>I noticed while completing the test that it might be conspicuous to always select [...], and that is why I tried to fake less conspicuously from this point on and also sometimes responded [...].</u> ”	E NFC
	Trying to convey certainty	—	“ <u>Selected [...] to show that I am certain.</u> ”	E NFC

Note: The quoted material usually contains more than one component (i.e., clusters, global behaviors, and specific behaviors), so the parts we coded for each respective component are underlined, and we shortened the quoted material to capture what is relevant for understanding. [...] indicates that the quoted material was shortened within the respective sentence. Words presented in square brackets were added to aid understanding.
Abbreviations: E, Extraversion; NFC, Need for Cognition.

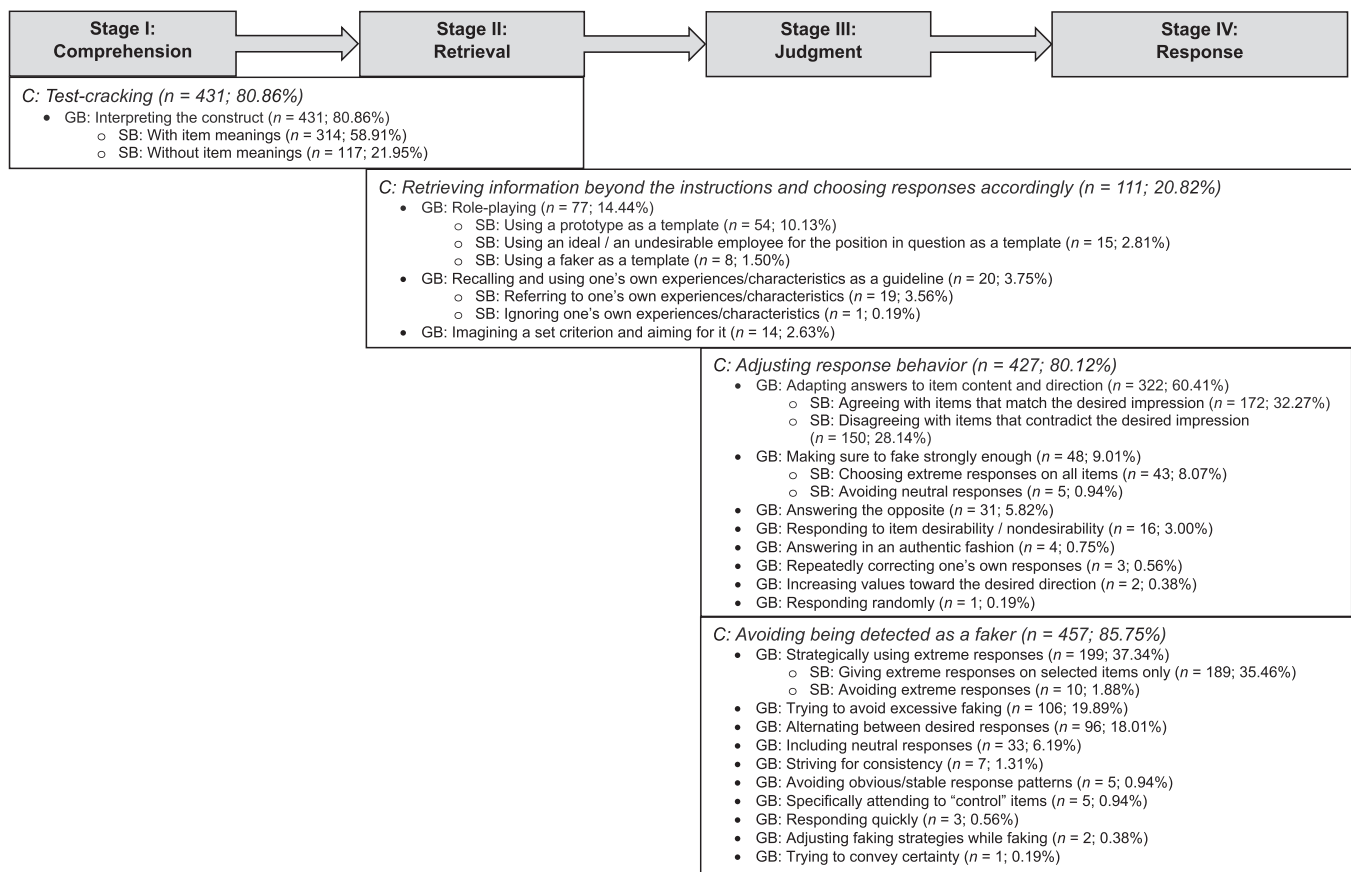


FIGURE 2 | Taxonomy of faking behaviors in self-reported personality scales sorted along the four stages of the general response process model. The four *stages* of the GRPM (e.g., Krosnick 1999; Tourangeau and Rasinski 1988) are represented in the upper gray-shadowed boxes in bold typeface. *Clusters* that serve different goals (i.e., C) associated with these stages are represented in the lower white boxes in italics. *Global behaviors* that constitute faking strategies (i.e., GB) are represented in the lower white boxes in normal typeface and begin with a black bullet point. *Specific behaviors* that constitute faking strategies (i.e., SB) are listed below the global behaviors and begin with a white bullet point. In each case, the percentages refer to the proportions of participants reports that included the behavior or cluster in both data sets concerning faking high and low scores and concerning E and NFC (i.e., out of 533—the total number of reports).

dependent variables were the global behaviors and specific behaviors in each case.

5.6 | Methodological Integrity¹⁰

5.6.1 | Power Analyses

With regard to the manipulation check, sensitivity analyses using G*Power 3.1.7 (Faul et al. 2009) for a power of 0.95 and an α level of 0.05 revealed a minimum detectable effect size f of 0.28 in Data Set 1 and 0.31 in Data Set 2.

Concerning the qualitative content analysis, as a general rule of thumb, a sample size of 40 is considered large in such approaches (e.g., Boddy 2016). With a minimum of 79 participants per faking condition in the final sample, we therefore could have considered saturation to be granted. However, we acknowledge that the concept of saturation is not strictly tied to a predefined sample size or a rule of thumb. Ideally, saturation in qualitative research is achieved when no new relevant categories emerge from additional data. Thus, we also analyzed this issue. In our analyses, after reviewing the data from an average of 75.17

(SD = 14.59) participants, no additional categories were identified, which suggests that we had indeed reached saturation.

5.6.2 | Reliability of the Coding

To estimate the reliability of the coding, we computed Krippendorff's α (Krippendorff 1970). In the first step, an independent coder was asked to randomly select and code 10% of the responses given by participants in each data set and for each construct. To guarantee representativeness with regard to faking direction, in each data set and for each construct, 5% of the responses from participants who had been asked to fake high scores and 5% of the responses from participants who had been asked to fake low scores were randomly selected. In a second step, Krippendorff's α was separately computed for all of the global and specific behaviors derived from the analyses (Supporting Information S1: Table S5). In a third step, the reliability estimates were averaged to provide an overall impression of the reliability ($M = 0.84$, $SD = 0.31$). Using the conservative threshold of $\alpha \geq 0.80$ as an indication of reliable results (Krippendorff 2004), the coding in the present study was considered reliable.

6 | Results and Discussion

On the basis of participants' explanations of how they faked, the qualitative content analysis revealed a variety of faking behaviors in SRPSs that could be sorted along the four GRPM stages (comprehension, retrieval, judgment, and response). The resulting taxonomy of reported faking behaviors in SRPSs with its four clusters of 22 global and 13 specific behaviors is plotted in Figure 2.

6.1 | Faking Behaviors in SRPSs as Reported by Respondents and Sorted Along the GRPM Stages

6.1.1 | Stages of Comprehension and Retrieval

In the first two stages, when respondents faked in SRPSs, many aimed to crack the test (cluster: "Test-cracking"¹¹; 431 utterances; 80.86%¹²) by using the global behavior "Interpreting the construct" (431 utterances; 80.86%). This behavior shows that faking involves reflecting on what is measured and what the goal of faking is. To do so, most participants took the item meanings into account, as indicated by the more frequent reports of the specific behavior "With item meanings" (314 utterances; 58.91%) in comparison with the specific behavior "Without item meanings" (117 utterances; 21.95%).

We assigned the category "With item meanings" if the construct was mentioned *with reference to the items* (e.g., "On the items that supposedly measured high Extraversion, [...], and on the ones [items] that supposedly measured low Extraversion, [...]") or if individual characteristics reflecting the construct were mentioned with reference to the items (e.g., "For statements expressing high sociability and activity, [...]. I answered statements that negated this [...]"). The category "Without item meanings" was assigned if the construct was mentioned *without reference to the items* (e.g., "[...] very introverted [...]"), if individual characteristics reflecting the construct were mentioned without reference to the items (e.g., "[...] sociable, active [...]"), or if the reference to the construct was clear from referring to the instructions without the construct being mentioned again (e.g., "[...] the required characteristic [...]").

The identification of these categories dovetails with recent quantitative research showing that respondents only fake items of SRPSs that they think are relevant to the faking goal (Brown and Böckenholt 2022). The results are also in line with research from clinical psychology on ADHD symptom simulation in which 11% of the malingering participants selected the items from Conners' Adult ADHD Rating Scale (Conners, Erhardt, and Sparrow 1998) that best fit the DSM-IV criteria for ADHD (Harrison, Edwards, and Parker 2007).¹³ Furthermore, the findings match the results of previous qualitative analyses in showing that respondents evaluate whether or not it is important to fake certain items in SRPSs (Ziegler 2011). To do so, they need to consider the *items' meanings*. Consequently, the results align with previous qualitative research that revealed increased semantic processing of item content under faking (Hauenstein et al. 2017).

6.1.2 | Stages of Retrieval, Judgment, and Response

In these stages, when respondents faked in SRPSs, they adjusted their responses based on additional information (cluster: "Retrieving information beyond the instructions and choosing responses accordingly"; 111 utterances; 20.82%). To do so, they referred to at least one of the following three global behaviors: "Role-playing," "Recalling and using one's own experiences/characteristics as a guideline," and "Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it."

Out of these global behaviors, the one that occurred most frequently was "Role-playing" (77 utterances; 14.44%). Respondents who reported that they used it faked their responses by choosing responses that were in line with a mental image of a person. Three templates were utilized for role-playing as indicated by the specific behaviors: "Using a prototype as a template (54 utterances; 10.13%)," "Using an ideal/an undesirable employee for the position in question as a template (15 utterances; 2.81%)," and "Using a faker as a template (8 utterances; 1.50%)." Whereas the first category involved imagining a person who actually possessed the desired trait, the second focused on an ideal or undesirable employee, and the third entailed imagining a person who was faking that trait.

We assigned the category "Using a prototype as a template" if the respondent stated that they had mentally created some kind of character (e.g., "Tried to create a [...] character, [...]"), had put themselves in the shoes of another person or a prototype that had the target trait and responded accordingly (e.g., "Imagined that I am an extraverted person [...]"), or had responded like a person who had the target trait (e.g., "I tried to agree [...] with statements that an extraverted person would make"). The category "Using an ideal/an undesirable employee for the position in question as a template" was assigned if the respondent stated that they had considered ideal/undesirable responses from the employer's point of view (e.g., "[...] except for those [items] that I thought employers would frown upon if I chose 'strongly agree' as an answer") or if the respondent stated that they had responded to items while keeping in mind "what is expected"¹⁴ (e.g., "Knowing what answers are expected, I [...]"). The category "Using a faker as a template" was assigned if the respondent stated that they had put themselves in the role of a faker (e.g., "I put myself in the shoes of a person who wants to score low to avoid getting offered this job [...]") or if the respondent stated that they had put themselves in the described situation¹⁵ (e.g., "[...] put myself in the described situation").

Although the categories vary in the exact content of the mental image, all involve *playing a certain role*, thus aligning our results with previous conceptualizations of faking as role-playing (e.g., Levashina and Campion 2006; see also adopted schema model; e.g., Furnham 1990; Mahar, Cologon, and Duck 1995) and with results from previous quantitative research (e.g., Pauls and Crost 2005). However, the results of the present study extend previous insights by identifying *various templates* for role-playing. Out of these categories, "Using a prototype as a template" was reported most frequently and its identification is in line with prior malingering research, where 29% of participants thought of someone with ADHD and tried

to act like them to fake having ADHD (Harrison, Edwards, and Parker 2007). The category “Using an ideal/an undesirable employee for the position in question as a template” is in line with theoretical considerations on self-presentation in selection settings, where respondents adapt their self-image to meet situational demands and attract potential employers (e.g., Roulin and Krings 2020). It also dovetails with factor analyses that detected an ideal employee factor under faking (e.g., Schmit and Ryan 1993). Finally, it is in line with results from qualitative research on MFC formats showing that respondents activate information about “a stereotypical good worker” (Fuechtenhans and Brown 2022). To our knowledge, the category “Using a faker as a template” has not been suggested before but can be viewed as another approach to faking by using a model (a person who fakes).

The second global behavior “Recalling and using one's own experiences/characteristics as a guideline” (20 utterances; 3.75%) suggests that participants used their personal experiences or characteristics as an anchor for faking. This category's identification is in line with the retrieval of self-schemas in the self-schema model (e.g., McDaniel and Timm 1990) and with Ziegler (2011) findings from their qualitative research on a true personality core under faking. However, the results extend previous findings by identifying two specific behaviors that refer to *how* this recall was performed, either by “Referring to one's own experiences/characteristics” (19 utterances; 3.56%; assigned if the respondent stated that they had oriented themselves to their personal background (e.g., “[...] used my own experiences as a guideline”) or by “Ignoring one's own experiences/characteristics” (1 utterance; 0.19%; assigned if the respondent stated that they had ignored their personal background (e.g., “[...] ignored my own personal attitudes/characteristics”). The identification of these categories supports theoretical considerations that suggest respondents' past experiences may serve as an *anchor for faking* (Ellingson and McFarland 2011; Goffin and Boyd 2009). They also might point to somewhat similar faking processes between SRPSs and MFC formats because, in their qualitative study on MFC formats, Fuechtenhans and Brown (2022) observed that some participants retrieved past experiences, whereas others did not.

The third global behavior “Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it” (14 utterances; 2.63%) demonstrates that, while faking, respondents had a target value in mind that they wanted to reach. We assigned the category if the respondent stated that they had aimed for a certain test score (e.g., “[...] to answer the questions in a way that I consider myself to be in the medium to low range in terms of Need for Cognition”). The identification of this category is in line with the theoretical consideration that faking is an intentional change in one's typical responses to achieve an intended goal (e.g., Tett and Simonet 2011). It also indicates that faking leads to semantic rather than self-referenced interpretations of items in SRPSs (van Hooft and Born 2012)—an idea that has also been supported in previous qualitative research (Hauenstein et al. 2017). Last but not least, it shows that, for some respondents who faked, the faked scores were not related to their own reality. Conversely, for others, the faked scores were still associated with their true scores (e.g., “Referring to one's own experiences/characteristics”). Consequently, whether faked scores are related to true scores *varies*, a

fact that offers important advice concerning faking detection, prevention, and research.

6.1.3 | Stages of Judgment and Response

In the final two stages, faking in SRPSs involved adjustments in responses (cluster: “Adjusting response behavior”; 427 utterances; 80.12%) and making efforts to evade detection (cluster: “Avoiding being detected as a faker”; 457 utterances; 85.75%), comprising eight and 10 global as well as four and two specific behaviors, respectively.

6.1.3.1 | Adjusting Responses. The first global behavior (“Adapting answers to item content and direction”) was the most frequently reported behavior for adjusting responses (322 utterances; 60.41%). Thus, most respondents reported that, while they were faking, they paid attention to the content of the item and to its direction (i.e., whether choosing “[strongly] agree” or “[strongly] disagree” on the respective item would indicate the desired or undesired impression). This finding is in line with models that suggest that faking differs by item (Goffin and Boyd 2009), recent research that argues that faking is an item-level-based process (Brown and Böckenholt 2022), and qualitative research demonstrating that respondents increased semantic item processing while faking (Hauenstein et al. 2017). However, the findings of the present study extend this insight by revealing that (item-level-based) faking behavior *varies with the faking direction*. Thus, the current qualitative data analysis supports and extends the argument—previously rooted in quantitative data analyses—that faking high and low scores in SRPSs could be distinct processes (Bensch et al. 2019; but cf. Geiger, Bärwaldt, and Wilhelm 2021).

We identified two specific behaviors that occurred with similar frequency and refer to *how* respondents adapted their responses to item content and direction: “Agreeing with items that match the desired impression” (172 utterances; 32.27%; assigned if the respondent stated that they had endorsed statements that indicated the desired impression [e.g., concerning the faking of high scores: “Strongly agreed with statements that indicated Extraversion”]) and “Disagreeing with items that contradict the desired impression” (150 utterances; 28.14%; assigned if the respondent stated that they *had rejected statements* that conflicted with the desired impression [e.g., concerning the faking of high scores: “Strongly disagreed with items that referred to low scores on Need for Cognition”). The identification of these categories underpins recent quantitative research that used item response tree models and demonstrated strong directional responses while faking (Lee, Joo, and Jia 2022). Underscoring the complexity of faking behavior, whereas some respondents reported that they simply faked high or low scores by using one of these specific behaviors (8.79% and 5.76%) about 23.20% of respondents in our study reported that they *combined* them to fake.

The second global behavior (“Making sure to fake strongly enough”; 48 utterances; 9.01%) shows that some respondents felt that it was important for their faking to be strong enough. We identified two specific behaviors that refer to how

participants aimed to ensure this: “Choosing extreme responses on all items” (assigned if the respondent stated that they had always chosen extreme responses without considering the item content [e.g., “I always chose the extreme responses: ‘strongly disagree’ or ‘strongly agree’ [...]”]) and “Avoiding neutral responses” (assigned if the respondent stated that they had omitted the neutral category [e.g., “[...] I focused on never ticking the middle [...]”]). The former was more frequent (43 utterances; 8.07%) than the latter (5 utterances; 0.94%). The identification of these categories is in line with earlier empirical findings from quantitative data that observed more extreme and directional responses (Lee, Joo, and Jia 2022), more eye fixations on the extreme anchors (van Hooff and Born 2012), and blatant extreme responding while faking (Levashina et al. 2014). The categories also corroborate previous quantitative research on slight and extreme faking (Zickar, Gibby, and Robie 2004; but cf. Ziegler et al. 2015). Furthermore, they are in line with previous qualitative research that showed more extreme responding under faking (Hauenstein et al. 2017). Last but not least, the identification of these categories is especially interesting given that extreme responding is usually considered to be a response style. Thus, the present research shows how closely intertwined response styles (e.g., extreme responding) and response sets (e.g., faking) can be. This finding has implications for quantitative research designs aimed at modeling response styles. If response styles overlap with response sets, the models run the risk of picking up *more variance* than they targeted. In fact, in some cases, the same behavior can be used for different purposes, which means that any interpretation requires sufficient knowledge about the situation to avoid erroneous conclusions. Hence, mixture models including different classes might be advisable.

Global behavior number three (“Answering the opposite”; 31 utterances; 5.82%) revealed that some respondents faked by responding opposite to a reference point. The category was assigned if the respondent stated that they had answered the opposite of how they responded at the baseline assessment (e.g., “I chose responses that were the opposite of those I selected in the first measurement”), the opposite of what was expected (personnel selection scenario; e.g., “I responded with the opposite of what was expected”), or the opposite of their “true self” (e.g., “I always selected the opposite of how I actually am”).¹⁶ The phenomenon of answering the opposite has been reported before (Peterson et al. 2011) and it has been argued that it reflects the *complexity* of faking (Kuncel and Tellegen 2009). The current results corroborated this interpretation.

The fourth global behavior (“Responding to item desirability/nondesirability”; 16 utterances; 3.00%) shows that, while faking, some respondents orient their responses on the general *positivity* or *negativity* of items. The category was assigned if the respondent stated that they had considered the “positivity or negativity of responses” or “good answers versus bad answers” when responding to items (e.g., “[...] chose options between [...] with positively connoted items”). The identification of this category supports the idea that socially desirable responding might work not only as a *response style* but also as a *response set*.¹⁷ It also is in line with previous qualitative research indicating that item desirability affects faking (Hauenstein

et al. 2017). Last but not least, it dovetails with qualitative research on faking in MFC formats which showed that respondents selected items based on their desirability (Fuechtenhans and Brown 2022).

Global behavior number five (“Answering in an authentic fashion”; four utterances; 0.75%) suggests that some respondents answered honestly because they possessed the desired trait. We assigned the category if the respondent stated that they had answered in an honest or authentic fashion (e.g., “Answered honestly because I am an [...] myself”). The identification of this category is in line with earlier considerations that respondents *fake only when they need to* (e.g., Ellingson 2011; Goffin and Boyd 2009). In their qualitative research, Ziegler (2011) showed that respondents react to items they evaluate as *irrelevant* to the faking goal by answering truthfully. The findings of the present study complement previous insights by revealing that respondents’ decisions to respond authentically or to fake are influenced not only by their assessment of the relevance of the specific item in question but also by their evaluation of whether they (already) possess the desired trait. Thus, while faking, truthful responses may be provided on relevant items (if respondents have the desired traits) and on irrelevant items (if respondents do not have the desired traits). In turn, faked responses may be given on relevant items (if respondents do not have the desired traits). Notably, respondents reported that they answered authentically only on some but not on all items (e.g., “Authentic selection of those items [...] that for me, subjectively represent introverted behavior”), and thus, the behavior can be understood as a part of the faking strategy, further highlighting the complexity of faking.

The sixth global behavior (“Repeatedly correcting oneone’s own responses”; three utterances; 0.56%) indicates that some respondents intentionally made mistakes to “fake bad.” The category was assigned if the respondent stated that they had purposefully committed errors to leave a negative impression (e.g., “Deliberately chose wrong answers, showed disinterest and ignorance in responding correctly”). The finding is in line with malingering research that found that 23% of participants deliberately chose the wrong items (Conners, Erhardt, and Sparrow 1998) to simulate ADHD. In addition, by demonstrating that respondents’ motivation to avoid looking bad might not apply to all faking directions, our finding extends knowledge from previous qualitative research (Fuechtenhans and Brown 2022).

Global behavior number seven (“Increasing values toward the desired direction”; 2 utterances; 0.38%) indicates that, while faking, some respondents just exaggerated or understated their “true” responses. The category was assigned if the respondent stated that they had given their “true” responses a “push” in the right direction (e.g., “I tried to answer as I normally would but ticked a response option higher toward Extraversion for every second or third question”). The identification of this category is in line with prior theorizing that exaggeration is a particular variant of faking (Griffith et al. 2011). In contrast to other faking behaviors (e.g., “Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it”) that do not necessarily refer to respondents’ true scores, respondents who fake via exaggeration only “polish” the truth (e.g., Griffith et al. 2011). These behaviors may partly

explain empirical findings on two types of faking in quantitative data (i.e., slight and extreme faking; Zickar, Gibby, and Robie 2004; but cf. Ziegler et al. 2015).

The eighth global behavior (“Responding randomly”; 1 utterance; 0.19%) showed that faking also involved the arbitrary selection of response options. We assigned this category if the respondent stated that they had chosen response options at random (e.g., “Tried to move randomly between ‘SD’ [*strongly disagree*] and ‘D’ [*disagree*] [...]). The identification of this category is in line with research from clinical psychology that found that 20% of malingering participants completed tasks quickly and carelessly (Conners, Erhardt, and Sparrow 1998). At first glance, this category may seem similar to careless responding because one type of carelessness involves “random responding.” However, the difference lies in motivation: Careless responders aim to satisfice by responding “randomly” (e.g., to effort; Schroeders, Schmidt, and Gnambs 2022), whereas respondents who fake intend to leave a *bad impression* by doing so.

6.1.3.2 | Avoiding Detection. The first global behavior (“Strategically using extreme responses”; 199 utterances; 37.34%) was the most frequently reported effort toward “anti-detection.” The specific behaviors refer to *how* respondents strategically dealt with extreme responses to evade faking detection: “Giving extreme responses on selected items only” (assigned if the respondent stated that they had provided extreme responses on particular items only, e.g., according to the subjective importance of the items [e.g., “On items that I considered to be very central to the construct of Introversion, I always answered with extremes [...].”]¹⁸ and “Avoiding extreme responses” (assigned if the respondent stated that they had refrained from using extreme responses altogether [e.g., “I did not use extreme responses”). The former was more frequent (189 utterances; 35.46%) than the latter (10 utterances; 1.88%). The identification of these categories is in line with previous research revealing that some respondents perceived extreme responses on all items as not *credible* and other respondents were concerned that extreme responding might make them appear *arrogant* (Kuncel and Tellegen 2009).

Global behavior number two (“Trying to avoid excessive faking”; 106 utterances; 19.89%) shows that some respondents attempted to avoid extreme faking. It was assigned if the respondent stated that they had tried not to fake excessively (e.g., “[...], I made sure not to appear too extreme but to find a good balance”). The identification of this category dovetails with findings from qualitative research by Ziegler (2011), who demonstrated that *excessive* faking was related to specific personality traits (e.g., narcissism) and a faker’s belief that they could actually live up to the role they were playing.

The third global behavior (“Alternating between desired responses”; 96 utterances; 18.01%) was assigned if the respondent stated that, while faking, they had switched between response options that were in line with the desired impression (e.g., “For items that were associated with high NFC, I ticked high values, i.e., 1–3 [...]).”¹⁹ The identification of this category revealed that, while faking, respondents

alternated between desired response options probably because they assumed that this behavior would help them avoid being detected as fakers.

Global behavior number four (“Including neutral responses”; 33 utterances; 6.19%) shows that some respondents included neutral ratings to avoid faking detection and it was assigned if the respondent stated that they had done so (e.g., “For questions about Extraversion [...], [I chose] more [...] neutral ratings to appear more authentic”). This category’s identification supports previous quantitative and qualitative research that pointed to the occurrence of midpoint responding during faking (König, Mura, and Schmidt 2015; Ziegler 2011) and research that revealed that respondents may consider the use of only extremes to be too obvious (Kuncel and Tellegen 2009). However, the present research extends current knowledge by showing that respondents may strategically use neutral responses when aiming for *antidetection*.

The fifth global behavior (“Striving for consistency”; 7 utterances; 1.31%) demonstrates that, while faking, some respondents tried to present credible and matching responses. We assigned the category if the respondent stated that they had tried to leave a consistent impression (e.g., “[...], tried to be consistent between responses, e.g., I don’t like talking to other people ... and I don’t like being the center of attention”). The identification of this category is in line with qualitative findings revealing that participants assume that the interpretation of their responses is based on their *consistency* (König, Merz, and Trauffer 2012) and that creating a consistent profile will decrease the risk of being detected as a faker (Fuechtenhans and Brown 2022).

Global behavior number six (“Avoiding obvious/stable response patterns”; five utterances; 0.94%) demonstrates that some participants responded in a manner designed to avoid leaving *suspicious response patterns* that might reveal their faking. The category was assigned if the respondent stated that they had tried to avoid obvious response patterns or tendencies (e.g., “Avoided obvious response patterns to avoid being detected as a faker”).

The seventh global behavior (“Specifically attending to ‘control’ items”; five utterances; 0.94%) shows that some respondents had expected *control*. We assigned the category if the respondent stated that they had assumed that items were included to assess the credibility of their responses (e.g., “On an item that was ambiguous, I answered neutrally. Could have been a response tendency item”). The identification of this category dovetails with earlier findings from qualitative research showing that participants believe that faking can be detected (König, Merz, and Trauffer 2012).

Global behavior number eight (“Responding quickly”; three utterances; 0.56%) shows that some respondents tended to speed through their responses to avoid faking detection. The category was assigned if the respondent stated that they had responded rapidly (e.g., “Tried to come up with [...] answers as quickly as possible”). We assume that they thought that *lying takes time* (e.g., Suchotzki et al. 2017) and thus tried to avoid being caught by being quick.²⁰

The ninth global behavior (“Adjusting faking strategies while faking”; two utterances; 0.38%) shows that changed their strategy over the course of faking so that they were not too obvious about their faking. We assigned the category if the respondent stated that they had begun faking in a certain manner but then changed their strategy (e.g., “I noticed while completing the test that it might be conspicuous to always select [...], and, i.e., why I tried to fake less conspicuously from this point on and also sometimes responded [...]).²¹ The identification of this category supports a faking model that suggests faking not as the last step in the faking process, but as the *starting point* of adaptive dynamics between those who fake and those who evaluate the measure (Roulin, Krings, and Binggeli 2016). Thus, the present study supports previous theorizing, but also extends current knowledge by showing that adaptation is not restricted to occur *after faking*, but also happens *during faking*.

The tenth global behavior (“Trying to convey certainty”; 1 utterance; 0.19%) shows that attempts were made to convey the impression of certainty regarding the faked responses. The category was assigned if the respondent stated that they had aimed to project confidence (e.g., “Selected [...] to show that I am certain”). Apparently, the respondent held the common-sense assumption that certainty would convey the impression of credibility.

6.2 | Combinations of Reported Faking Behaviors

Participants reported a variety of faking behaviors when they faked in SRPSs (Table 2). Some were reported very frequently (e.g., “Interpreting the construct”), whereas others were rarely reported (e.g., “Responding randomly”).²² Moreover, the 22 global behaviors and 13 specific behaviors in their four clusters were combined in various ways to constitute individual faking strategies. Due to space restrictions, we provide an overview in the Supplement (see Supporting Information S1: Figure S1). Altogether, there were 137 combinations. The smallest combination included two faking behaviors (e.g., “Using an ideal/an undesirable employee for the position in question as a template” was combined with “Trying to avoid excessive faking”). The largest combination involved eight faking behaviors (e.g., participants interpreted the construct “With item meanings” and adapted their answers to the item content and direction by selecting “Agreeing with items that match the desired impression” as well as “Disagreeing with items that contradict the desired impression” and “Trying to avoid excessive faking” and strategically used extreme responses by “Giving extreme responses on selected items only” and used “Striving for consistency,” “Including neutral responses,” and at the top “Alternating between desired responses”).

In the most frequent combination, participants reported that they interpreted the construct “With item meanings” and adapted their answers to the item content and direction by selecting “Agreeing with items that match the desired impression” as well as “Disagreeing with items that contradict the desired impression.” Eighty-eight combinations were reported with the least frequency (were unique). All of them consisted of two to eight faking behaviors. An example of such an infrequent combination is when participants reported that they interpreted the construct “Without item meanings,” and they reported that they used “Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it.”

6.3 | Generalizability of the Taxonomy of Reported Faking Behaviors in SRPSs

Results of Fisher's exact tests largely support the generalizability of the findings concerning faking conditions (see also Supporting Information S1: Table S6–S8) with some exceptions that were predominantly observed with respect to faking direction.

6.3.1 | Across Faking Directions

With eight exceptions, the frequencies of the use of different faking behaviors as reported by respondents did not differ between faking directions (Supporting Information S1: Table S6). The odds of adapting answers to the item content and direction by “Agreeing with items that match the desired impression” were 2.94 times higher, the odds of making sure they faked strongly enough by “Choosing extreme responses on all items” were 2.50 times higher, the odds of strategically using extreme responses by “Giving extreme responses on selected items only” were 2.38 times higher, and the odds of interpreting the construct “With item meanings” were 1.86 times higher when participants faked high scores than when they faked low scores.²³ Conversely, the odds of “Referring to one's own experiences/characteristics” (OR = 0.18), “Answering the opposite” (OR = 0.03), and “Including neutral responses” (OR = 0.17) were lower when participants faked high scores than when they faked low scores. Thus, the taxonomy was largely applicable to both faking directions, but the results also indicate some direction-specific differences in faking behaviors.²⁴

6.3.2 | Across Different Constructs

There were no differences in the occurrence of reported faking behaviors between the two constructs (Supporting Information S1: Table S7). Therefore, the taxonomy was applicable to both constructs.²⁵

6.3.3 | Across Different Samples

With two exceptions (i.e., “Trying to avoid excessive faking” and “Using a faker as a template”), the frequencies of reported faking behaviors did not differ between the two data sets (Supporting Information S1: Table S8). The odds of “Trying to avoid excessive faking” were 2.32 times higher for participants in Data Set 2 than those in Data Set 1.²⁶ Thus, the taxonomy was largely applicable to both data sets.²⁷

7 | General Discussion

Conducting a qualitative content analysis, we investigated respondents' reported faking behaviors that constitute faking strategies in SRPSs and we related them to the GRPM. The present analyses suggest that a wide *variety of faking behaviors* (i.e., several global behaviors and even variations of them [specific behaviors]) are involved in the process of faking in SRPSs. In addition, these behaviors are related to all stages of

TABLE 2 | Frequencies of global behaviors and specific behaviors with respect to clusters in the four stages of the general response process model in responding to self-reported personality scales when compared for faking direction (faking high vs. faking low), construct (Extraversion vs. Need for Cognition), and data set (1 vs. 2).

Stages and clusters	Frequency					
	Global behaviors	Specific behaviors	Faking direction	Extraversion (Data Set 1) Need for Cognition (Data Set 1) Extraversion (Data Set 2)		
<i>Comprehension and retrieval</i>						
Test-cracking	Interpreting the construct	With item meanings	Faking high	65	55	56
			Faking low	51	43	44
<i>Retrieval, judgment, and response</i>	Role-playing	Without item meanings	Faking high	15	24	12
			Faking low	27	20	19
		Using a prototype as a template	Faking high	5	11	7
			Faking low	9	10	12
Retrieving information beyond the instructions and choosing responses accordingly	Using an ideal/an undesirable employee for the position in question as a template	Using a faker as a template	Faking high	1	2	3
			Faking low	1	4	4
		Referring to one's own experiences/characteristics	Faking high	—	—	1
			Faking low	—	2	5
<i>Judgment and response</i>	Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it	Ignoring one's own experiences/characteristics	Faking high	7	5	4
			Faking low	—	—	1
		Agreeing with items that match the desired impression	Faking high	1	3	1
			Faking low	3	3	3
Adjusting response behavior	Adapting answers to item content and direction	Disagreeing with items that contradict the desired impression	Faking high	46	37	33
			Faking low	18	21	17
		Choosing extreme responses on all items	Faking high	26	30	21
			Faking low	21	24	28
(Continues)						

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Stages and clusters	Global behaviors	Specific behaviors	Faking direction	Frequency		
				Extraversion (Data Set 1)	Need for Cognition (Data Set 1)	Extraversion (Data Set 2)
		Avoiding neutral responses	Faking high	—	3	2
			Faking low	—	—	—
	Answering the opposite	—	Faking high	—	—	1
			Faking low	12	13	5
	Responding to item desirability/nondesirability	—	Faking high	2	1	1
			Faking low	2	6	4
	Answering in an authentic fashion	—	Faking high	—	—	—
			Faking low	2	1	1
	Repeatedly correcting one's own responses	—	Faking high	—	—	—
			Faking low	—	2	1
	Increasing values toward the desired direction	—	Faking high	—	—	1
			Faking low	—	1	—
	Responding randomly	—	Faking high	—	—	—
			Faking low	1	—	—
Avoiding being detected as a faker	Strategically using extreme responses	Giving extreme responses on selected items only	Faking high	44	38	38
			Faking low	19	25	25
		Avoiding extreme responses	Faking high	2	1	—
			Faking low	1	3	3
	Trying to avoid excessive faking	—	Faking high	13	13	23
			Faking low	15	18	24
	Alternating between desired responses	—	Faking high	17	9	17
			Faking low	21	20	12
	Including neutral responses	—	Faking high	1	—	4
			Faking low	10	8	10
	Striving for consistency	—	Faking high	1	—	2
			Faking low	2	1	1

(Continues)

TABLE 2 | (Continued)

Stages and clusters	Global behaviors	Specific behaviors	Faking direction	Frequency		
				Extraversion (Data Set 1)	Need for Cognition (Data Set 1)	Extraversion (Data Set 2)
Avoiding obvious/stable response patterns		—	Faking high	—	2	—
			Faking low	—	2	1
Specifically attending to “control” items		—	Faking high	2	—	—
			Faking low	—	—	3
Responding quickly		—	Faking high	1	2	—
			Faking low	—	—	—
Adjusting faking strategies while faking		—	Faking high	1	—	—
			Faking low	—	1	—
Trying to convey certainty		—	Faking high	1	—	—
			Faking low	—	—	—

the GRPM and in each case span more than one stage of the GRPM. Moreover, we showed that they can be combined in various ways, thus revealing the complex fabric that forms individual faking strategies in SRPSs. Last but not least, we largely demonstrated the generalizability of our results with respect to two different faking directions, two different constructs, and two independent data sets. Nevertheless, the results also indicate some direction-specific differences in faking behaviors. Our taxonomy is necessarily restricted to the faking conditions used in our study; future research should add other (frequencies of) faking behaviors that may potentially occur under different conditions.

7.1 | Theoretical Implications

Faking in SRPSs is much more complex than frequently assumed. This complexity refers not only to the stages of the GRPM that are involved in faking but also to the variety of faking behaviors, their combinations, and their generalizability.

7.1.1 | Faking Behaviors in SRPSs Occur in All Stages of the GRPM

Tourangeau and Rasinski (1988) proposed that faking occurs only in the last stage of the GRPM. However, our results expand the understanding of the faking process by suggesting that faking behaviors in SRPSs may occur in all four GRPM stages. Additionally, our results show that all faking behaviors span more than one stage of this model. For example, the behavior “Answering the opposite” may belong to both the judgment stage and the response stage, as participants first need to judge what the desired response is and then respond in the opposite direction. These findings emphasize the complex interplay across the GRPM stages in the context of faking behaviors in SRPSs, thereby underscoring the complexity of faking as indicated in earlier quantitative research (e.g., Bensch et al. 2019). They are also in line with theories suggesting the possibility of concurrently targeting GRPM stages (Angleitner, John, and Löhr 1986), thereby contributing to a better understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying faking in SRPSs.

7.1.2 | Faking in SRPSs Involves a Variety of Possible Faking Behaviors

The complexity of the faking process in SRPSs was further highlighted by our identification of four clusters that include 22 global and 13 specific faking behaviors. The results of the present qualitative analysis integrate suggestions from theoretical models with insights from both quantitative and qualitative research. In doing so, they not only confirm previously suggested faking behaviors but also enrich previous suggestions by identifying new faking behaviors (e.g., “Using a faker as a template”) in SRPSs, expanding on the identification of faking behaviors and their understanding.

The faking behaviors identified here are unlikely to represent a comprehensive collection of all possible faking behaviors in

SRPSs. They are limited because our retrospective approach of asking participants about their faking behaviors after they faked may have increased the risk of them not remembering every behavior they applied. In addition, we restricted our investigation to a certain faking context. Additional faking behaviors may occur in other contexts (see Limitations and Future Research). Most likely, the entirety of faking behaviors in SRPSs is therefore *even more complex*. Nevertheless, the results of the present study represent a necessary first step toward a more comprehensive understanding of the variability in faking behaviors in SRPSs.

7.1.3 | Faking Behaviors in SRPSs Are Combined in Various Ways

The findings show that various combinations of faking behaviors occur—thus extending previous insights into the complexity of faking in SRPSs (e.g., Bensch et al. 2019; Röhner, Thoss, and Schütz 2022). Altogether, the present study identified 137 combinations of faking behaviors, ranging from combinations of two to up to eight faking behaviors. However, two opposing biases may have occurred. First, our method of asking participants to retrospectively report how they faked may have come with the drawback that some participants might not have remembered every behavior they used or might not have been motivated to report all behaviors. Second, we investigated faking in SRPSs in a certain faking context, and the combinations we found might depend on this specific faking context. Thus, our results could overestimate or underestimate the frequency of certain combinations (in other settings). To identify the exact number of combinations, further investigations with larger and varying samples are needed, certainly providing an avenue for future research.

7.1.4 | Faking Behaviors in SRPSs Are Largely Comparable Across Selected Conditions

The taxonomy of reported faking behaviors in SRPSs largely held across different faking directions, constructs, and samples, thus indicating a certain generalizability of the results. The differences observed occurred predominantly with respect to faking direction, a finding that supports earlier arguments that faking high and faking low should be considered related yet distinct types of faking (e.g., Bensch et al. 2019).

The results of the present study advance the understanding of faking by identifying specific differences between faking high and faking low. For example, when faking high scores, respondents more frequently referred to the category “With item meanings” than when faking low scores, indicating that item meaning is considered more important when faking high scores. In addition, the categories “Agreeing with items that match the desired impression,” “Choosing extreme responses on all items,” and “Giving extreme responses on selected items only” were referred to about twice as frequently when faking high than when faking low. This finding makes sense, as “agree” often reflects desirable responses, and including extreme responses might be perceived as particularly helpful for

faking them. For the same reasons, with faking low, the category “Including neutral responses” was referred to about six times more often, and the category “Referring to one’s own experiences/characteristics” was referred to about five times more often than with faking high. Last but not least, “Answering the opposite” was almost exclusively reported when faking low. This finding makes sense, as faking low often involves responding in the opposite direction to what is considered desirable.

7.2 | Practical Implications

The complexity of faking behaviors shown here has practical implications for studying faking as well as for its detection and prevention.

7.2.1 | Contradictory Findings Regarding the Effects of Faking May Be Caused by the Variety of Faking Behaviors in SRPSs and Their Combinations

With regard to the effects of faking, the use of the different faking behaviors in SRPSs may elicit different effects (e.g., concerning criterion-related validity). For example, respondents utilizing the behavior “Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it” might have scores that are completely made up, whereas those who do not apply this faking behavior still have some “true” variance in their scores. Consequently, “true” variance may still predict the criterion, or it might not. Combinations with other behaviors may reduce or increase such effects. For example, some participants reported that they combined “Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it” with “Trying to avoid excessive faking,” whereas others reported that they combined it with “Choosing extreme responses on all items.” All in all, the findings of the present study may help explain previous contradictory results from quantitative research on whether criterion-related validity is impaired by faking or not (e.g., Ones and Viswesvaran 1998; Salgado 2016).

7.2.2 | Challenges in Detecting and Preventing Faking in SRPSs May Be Grounded in the Complexity of Faking Behaviors and Their Combinations

The variability and diversity in combinations of faking behaviors in SRPSs underscore how complex the detection and prevention of faking in SRPSs is and may explain why research on the subject has faced serious challenges (Bill and Melchers 2022). Because there are *various* ways to fake, it might be necessary to use different faking indices to detect respondents who differ in their faking behaviors, and there might be a need to use different proactive approaches to prevent respondents from using these various faking behaviors. For example, if one tries to detect faking in SRPSs on the basis of blatant extreme responding (e.g., Landers, Sackett, and Tuzinski 2011; Levashina et al. 2014), this approach will most likely work for respondents who faked solely by using the behavior “Choosing extreme responses on all items,” but it will not work for those who used other faking behaviors (e.g., “Avoiding extreme responses”). In addition, the

results of the present study indicate the existence of different faking styles (e.g., considering the global behavior “Imagining a set criterion and aiming for it,” either the faked score still somehow involves the true score or the faked score is completely made up) that could not be detected or prevented with only a single method. Last but not least, the present results indicate that some respondents adjust their faking behaviors, which challenges faking indices and preventive approaches even more because the suspicious behavior may change over the course of the assessment (even within a single) measure.

Combinations of faking behaviors lead to further challenges in the detection or prevention of faking. For example, it is plausible that detecting a respondent who, while faking, tries to understand the items, adjusts their response behavior, and applies antidetection techniques may require a different approach than detecting one who engages in faking just by trying to understand the items and adjusting their responses to achieve their faking goal. Although some (combinations of) faking behaviors occur more frequently than others in SRPSs, rare faking behaviors are still relevant, as they are less predictable and are thus more challenging to detect and prevent (Zickar and Drasgow 1996).²⁸

Some faking behaviors (e.g., “Choosing extreme responses on all items”) are in line with recommendations on how to detect faking (e.g., to monitor blatant extreme responding; Levashina et al. 2014). Nevertheless, researchers should be aware that, given the complexity of faking behaviors and their combinations in SRPSs, each approach likely identifies only *a certain type of faking* (e.g., extreme faking). The same is true for the prevention of faking. When keeping the complexity of faking behaviors in SRPSs in mind, it seems unlikely that everyone can be prevented from faking with the same approach (e.g., decreasing response times).

Thus, attempts to detect or prevent faking in SRPSs can easily become a complex endeavor. Future research should therefore investigate appropriate indices for detecting such complex patterns of faking and develop appropriate methods for their prevention. Most likely, it will be necessary to develop detection and prevention methods that account for the variety of faking behaviors in SRPSs and are at least as complex as the faking behaviors themselves.

7.3 | Limitations and Future Research

The present study has at least four potential limitations. First, to minimize the risks of working memory overload and consequent effects on the faking process, we collected self-reports on faking behaviors *after* participants had completed the task. Despite ensuring anonymity and not warning about faking detection to reduce bias (e.g., caused by the motivation to make a good impression), it cannot be ruled out that biases occurred and limited the reported faking behaviors. Relatedly, participants might not have reported *all* faking behaviors (e.g., due to a lack of memory or motivation). Thus, the results of the present study likely reflect some of the possible faking behaviors and are more of a map to build upon.

Second, respondents were not asked to report their faking behavior after each item on the respective measures. As Wilt

and Revelle (2015) emphasized, items can contain affective, behavioral, cognitive, and desire-related content. It is reasonable to assume that the decision on whether an item is relevant and should be faked may be related to its content. Thus, the faking behaviors reported might vary systematically with the item content. Future research should explore these associations.

Third, future research should further investigate the combinations of faking behaviors that constitute individual faking strategies. Despite the need for extensive data to analyze these combinations effectively, the findings of the present study indicate that many respondents use multiple faking behaviors, a finding that warrants further exploration.

Fourth, faking has been demonstrated to depend on faking conditions (e.g., the to-be faked measure, the to-be-faked constructs, and the faking directions; Birkeland et al. 2006; Röhner, Thoss, and Schütz 2022) that form a certain faking context. Thus, our study's focus on a certain faking context also implies that the generalizability of our taxonomy is limited to this context and, therefore represents a building block in the development of an exhaustive taxonomy. We examined *faking in SRPSs*. Faking on other measures (e.g., interviews) may differ and might not be fully in line with the GRPM, which was primarily developed to explain response processes in SRPSs (Krosnick 1999). To avoid overburdening participants and to avoid limiting our focus to the Five Factor Model, the present study was restricted to *two personality traits* (E and NFC). On the one hand, employing more than two constructs could increase cognitive load, potentially making faking more difficult. On the other hand, faking varies with respect to the to-be-faked construct (e.g., Birkeland et al. 2006). Therefore, both issues may promote additional faking behaviors and strategies or affect their frequencies. Moreover, (frequencies of) faking behaviors and strategies might differ depending on whether the construct is *targeted or nontargeted*. Furthermore, to avoid overburdening participants, we did not use a complete personality inventory. However, investigating faking in personality inventories with items measuring various traits may reveal other (frequencies of) faking behaviors and strategies. In addition, in the present study faking behaviors that constitute faking strategies in *Likert-type rating scales* were investigated, and (frequencies of) faking behaviors and strategies on other response formats might differ. Moreover, we used *instructions to fake high scores and low scores*. However, participants can be instructed to fake in different ways (e.g., in line with a certain job profile, Geiger, Bärwaldt, and Wilhelm 2021; making good vs. bad impressions, Bensch et al. 2019; faking contrary to one's true responses, Agosta et al. 2011), and research has shown that faking differs depending on such instructions (e.g., Mahar, Cologon, and Duck 1995; Martin, Bowen, and Hunt 2002). It is plausible that instructing respondents to answer opposite to their true responses could increase the frequencies of behaviors that were rarely reported in the present study (e.g., *Answering the opposite*) and reduce the frequencies of others (e.g., due to the restrictive nature of instructions on how to fake). Instructions that ask respondents to fake a job profile might produce additional faking behaviors and strategies or affect their frequencies (e.g., concerning antidetection efforts). In addition, competitiveness impacts faking (Roulin and Krings 2016), and we *did not reward respondents* who faked best. The samples in

the present study mainly consisted of first-semester undergraduate psychology students from two independent lab-based data sets. Furthermore, the participants in this study were instructed to fake (or to answer honestly). Faking in real-world settings was not investigated. While instructing participants to fake provides valuable insights into the strategies respondents can apply (Smith and Ellingson 2002), it remains a *simulation* that might overlook subtleties that could (only) occur in real-life faking. Thus, in applied settings, other (frequencies of) faking behaviors and strategies could emerge (e.g., concerning anti-detection efforts) because respondents know that faking is not desired. In addition, the instructions used in the present study were framed along simulated personnel selection scenarios, and the frequencies of several behaviors that we identified necessarily differed from those found in studies where participants pretended to suffer from ADHD (i.e., a different context; Conners, Erhardt, and Sparrow 1998). Last but not least, respondents in the present study were given information (e.g., on the to-be-measured construct), which could have affected the resulting behavior; however, such information is also typically accessible or even provided in real-life settings (e.g., through job advertisements that clearly describe the desired characteristics of the ideal candidates).

Because of these limitations and to further investigate the generalizability of the present study's results, future research should focus more strongly on item-specific faking, use other faking contexts, and add the respective (frequencies of) faking behaviors and faking strategies to the taxonomy introduced here. Future research should study faking with other measures, in more and other combinations of SRPSSs, when distinguishing between targeted and nontargeted constructs (e.g., by using the O*NET Work Styles), investigate faking in personality inventories and with other response formats (e.g., forced-choice formats, see Fuechtenhans and Brown 2022), with other types of instructions, with varying rewards for faking, in other samples (e.g., forensic samples or older samples), in settings with naturally occurring faking, with instructions relating to other settings (e.g., faking of clinical symptoms), and under conditions in which the ability to identify criteria relevant to faking (ATIC; Kleinmann et al. 2011) varies.

8 | Conclusion

By asking participants of how they faked in SRPSSs, the present study revealed four clusters that included 22 global and 13 specific behaviors, thereby extending previous findings. Moreover, the faking behaviors reported by respondents could be organized with respect to the stages of the GRPM. Our results clearly demonstrate that a lot is going on in respondents' minds when they fake in SRPSSs, that usually a combination of faking behaviors is used to constitute individual faking strategies, and that while faking, a substantial number of respondents also employ behaviors to avoid detection. We demonstrated a certain generalizability of our results with indications of some direction-specific differences in faking behaviors. However, the taxonomy introduced here is necessarily limited to the faking context used in this study. The present study revealed the complex nature of the behaviors that form individual faking strategies in SRPSSs. In doing so, it may advance efforts in faking

detection and prevention but the results surely do not represent the *entirety* of potential faking strategies. Thus, the present work should be complemented by future research uncovering the (frequencies of) faking behaviors and strategies in other contexts.

Author Contributions

Jessica Röhner: conceptualization, data curation, formal analysis, funding acquisition, investigation, methodology, project administration, visualization, writing—original draft preparation, writing—review and editing. **Astrid Schütz:** writing—review and editing, supervision. **Matthias Ziegler:** conceptualization, formal analysis, methodology, writing—review and editing, supervision.

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Ethics Statement

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The data we reanalyzed were collected in studies that had all been evaluated by a University Ethics Committee and approval was granted (approval numbers: V-108-15-BM-JR-IAT-14102015 and V-151-BM-JR-IAT-26072016).

Consent

All participants provided informed consent to participate in the study and of having their data published in a journal article.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF at <https://osf.io/2sg86/>, reference number osf.io/2sg86. We describe our sampling plan, all data exclusions, all manipulations, all measures, and all analyses that we used in the study. All analysis codes, data, a supplement including further analyses and also the guidelines for coders, as well as the outputs are stored on the OSF (https://osf.io/2sg86/?view_only=841d1c66db164ac1a391dedf180e32a5). Data were analyzed with the SPSS and the R software.

Endnotes

¹Moreover, in Ziegler (2011), participants were warned that faking could be detected. Therefore, it is not clear whether the results can be generalized to a typical setting in which such warnings do not occur.

- ²Researcher–participant relationship: The data were collected in the laboratory by student assistants. None of the authors had direct contact with the participants. Participants were predominantly first-semester undergraduate students. Thus, the risk of any relationship or interdependence was as low as possible, and there were no ethical considerations relevant to prior relationships. Furthermore, participants wrote down what they did to fake instead of verbally reporting it to an interviewer. Thus, not only were concerns related to social desirability reduced, but interactions between the student assistants and participants were also kept to a minimum. Altogether, a negative impact from the relationships between the authors or student assistants and the participants is unlikely.
- ³At first glance, it might sound counterintuitive to describe the construct and give some examples of how respondents with high versus low scores on the SRPSs would describe themselves to participants. However, note that in applied settings, job advertisements will typically describe the desired characteristics of the future job holder, and information on how respondents with high versus low scores on the SRPSs would describe themselves can easily be retrieved from the Internet.
- ⁴The main contribution of the current work is to offer an analysis of *the qualitative data* from these data sets. These qualitative data have never been analyzed or published before (see the Data Transparency Appendix and the Overview of Variables in Each Manuscript in the Supporting Information for detailed information).
- ⁵The word *naively* means that participants were not given faking strategies but had to use their own strategies (see, e.g., Röhner, Holden, and Schütz 2023).
- ⁶Note that there are also approaches where participants were not naïve with respect to faking strategies but were given specific faking strategies (e.g., faking opposite to ones' true responses; Agosta et al. 2011), an approach that probably would have decreased the number of faking behaviors and strategies that could have been identified.
- ⁷Description of researchers: The collaboration of the researchers was based on data availability and expertise in the topics of faking and qualitative research. One of the three authors designed the studies and supervised the data collection. All three researchers have been experts in the field of faking and research on this phenomenon for 15 to 30 years. The researchers also have prior experience with qualitative data analyses. Their expertise enhanced the process of analyzing the data. However, experts may also be at risk of overlooking faking behaviors because they might focus selectively on a set of assumed faking behaviors. We tackled this problem in two ways. First, to avoid overlooking any faking behaviors by applying categories beforehand and thus limiting our scope, we used qualitative content analysis and inductive coding so that categories would emerge from the data rather than being imposed a priori (Campion and Csillag 2022). Second, after we developed the coding system and coded the data, we asked a student (a nonexpert) to conduct an independent coding. Their coding was very similar to ours (see the Reliability of the Coding section below).
- ⁸Specifically, we chose the material (see also data preparation and data composition), analyzed the conditions of the data collection (see also the procedures used in the original studies), characterized the material (participants' responses), determined the direction of the analysis (precisely assessed the explicit content), clarified our research questions (see the theory section), defined the type of analysis (structuring; see also the coding system in the Supplement), and defined the unit of analysis (coding unit: faking behavior vs. context unit: faking strategy) before we carried out the analyses (see the analytical approach).
- ⁹Data Set 1: $n = 93$ concerning faking high and $n = 93$ concerning faking low [in each case multiplied by 2: E and NFC were coded separately]; Data Set 2: $n = 79$ concerning faking high and $n = 82$ concerning faking low.
- ¹⁰All analyses were performed with R (4.1.3) using the following packages: *effectsize* (0.7.0) (Ben-Shachar, Ludecke, and Makowski 2020), *ggh4x* (0.2.1) (Van den Brand 2021), *ggraph* (2.0.5) (Pedersen 2021), *ggtext* (0.1.1) (Wilke 2020), *here* (1.0.1) (Müller 2020), *patchwork* (1.1.1) (Pedersen 2020), *Rallfun v43* (Wilcox 2024), *scales* (1.2.0) (Wickham and Seidel 2022), *svglite* (2.1.0) (Wickham et al. 2022), *tidygraph* (1.2.1) (Pedersen 2022), and *tidyverse* (1.3.1) (Wickham, Averick, and Bryan 2019).
- ¹¹*Test-cracking* is the process of deciphering the underlying mechanisms of a measure, including understanding what is being measured and identifying the specific manner in which to respond to make a certain impression.
- ¹²In each case, the percentages refer to the proportions of participants reports that included the behavior or cluster in both data sets concerning faking high and low scores and concerning E and NFC (i.e., out of 533—the total number of reports).
- ¹³The occurrences of the behaviors in Harrison, Edwards, and Parker (2007) with the clinical measure differ from the occurrences of the behaviors in our study with SRPSs. This finding once again points to the complexity of faking, which depends on the conditions (e.g., on the to-be-faked measures: SRPSs or clinical scale).
- ¹⁴We did so because such a statement refers to the employer's expectations.
- ¹⁵We did so because this statement was clearly related to the instructions that the participants should imagine applying for a job and that it would help if they tried to score high/low—and putting oneself in this position is exactly what was explicitly stated in the other example above.
- ¹⁶The category “Answering the opposite” differs from the category “Disagreeing with items that contradict the desired impression” because “Answering the opposite” means answering the opposite to a certain reference point (in general) and not answering the opposite with respect to certain item content. Thus, the reference is more abstract here. In addition, “Answering the opposite” is not restricted to an answer of “[strongly] disagree.”
- ¹⁷Whereas a *response style* reflects a bias in responding that is consistent across time and measures, a *response set* is defined as a bias in responding that is activated only by context (e.g., Paulhus 2017).
- ¹⁸This category differs from the category “Choosing extreme responses on all items” because, here, the respondent stated the restriction that extreme responses were not given on all items (e.g., “[...] always chose ‘strongly agree’ when it came to appearing cheerful and active [...]”).
- ¹⁹This category is distinct from the categories of “Choosing extreme responses on all items” and “Giving extreme responses on selected items only” in that “Alternating between desired responses” on the one hand includes a variation in responses with respect to their desirability and on the other hand can be applied without using extremes.
- ²⁰Indeed, research has investigated whether inspecting reaction times can help detect faking, but results have been contradictory (Holden and Lambert 2015; but cf. Röhner and Holden 2022). The result that some participants try to respond quickly while faking may partly explain the contradictory findings.
- ²¹This category is different from the category “Strategically using extreme responses” because respondents can strategically use extreme responses without changing their strategy over the course of their faking.
- The category “Adjusting faking strategies while faking” is also different from the category “Trying to avoid excessive faking” because the latter can be done either in combination with changing the strategy or without changing the strategy at all.
- ²²One might think that rare faking behaviors are not important. However, Zickar and Drasgow (1996) investigated faking detection

in a group of respondents who had been asked to fake and compared those who had been coached on faking techniques in advance with those who had not been coached. They showed that, while faking, a maximum of 40% of respondents with coaching but only 20% of respondents without coaching were detected, indicating that the latter faked less predictably. Therefore, rare faking behaviors and strategies are particularly relevant, as they are less predictable, and their use is related to less detection (and most likely also to faking prevention). Thus, we decided to report all faking behaviors irrespective of their reported frequencies. Nevertheless, replications are needed before the practical relevance of rare faking behaviors and strategies can be assessed.

²³The odds concerning “Avoiding neutral responses” could not be computed because of cells with zero frequencies in the cross-tabulation.

²⁴There are several behaviors that could indicate additional direction-specific differences because respondents either referred to this behavior only when they were asked to fake high scores (i.e., “Ignoring one’s own experiences/characteristics,” “Responding quickly,” and “Trying to convey certainty”) or when they were asked to fake low scores (i.e., “Answering in an authentic fashion,” “Repeatedly correcting one’s own responses,” and “Responding randomly”). However, due to the low base rates associated with these behaviors and the nonsignificant differences, we stray from interpreting these differences. Future research has to investigate whether these differences are meaningful.

²⁵One may wonder whether combining the two faking directions impacted the results of the investigation of the generalizability with respect to the construct. We therefore additionally computed the analyses separately for each faking direction. The results demonstrated that there was only one significant difference ($p = 0.030$) in the occurrence of faking behaviors between the two constructs when faking high scores, indicating that, when faking high scores, the odds of “Choosing extreme responses on all items” were 2.93 times higher when scores were faked on NFC than when they were faked on E, and there were no significant differences in the occurrence of faking behaviors between the two constructs when faking low scores (Supporting Information S1: Tables S9 and S10). Thus, the results were largely comparable.

²⁶The odds for “Using a faker as a template” could not be computed because of cells with zero frequencies in the cross-tabulation.

²⁷One may also wonder whether combining the two faking directions impacted the results of the investigation of the generalizability with respect to the data set. We therefore additionally computed the analyses separately for each faking direction. The results demonstrated that there was only one significant difference ($p = 0.023$) in the occurrence of faking behaviors between the two data sets when faking high scores, indicating that, when faking high scores, the odds of “Trying to avoid excessive faking” were 2.51 times higher when scores were faked in Data Set 2 than when they were faked in Data Set 1, and there was only one significant difference ($p = 0.021$) in the occurrence of faking behaviors between the two data sets when faking low scores, indicating that, when faking low scores, the odds of “Using a faker as a template” were higher when scores were faked in Data Set 2 than when they were faked in Data Set 1 (Supporting Information S1: Tables S11 and S12).

²⁸In addition, it is important to recognize that psychological assessments are typically implemented in contexts where important decisions result (e.g., personnel assessment, forensics). In these settings, even a few undetected fakers can cause severe damage.

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Supporting Information

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section.