

CHAPTER 7

Fraudulent Identification and Biography

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Looks are one thing and facts are another.
Herman Melville

Things are rarely what they seem.
Skim milk masquerades as cream.
Gilbert and Sullivan

If this were played upon a stage now, I could condemn it as an improbable
fiction.
Shakespeare

Deception regarding identity and biography are common but little commented upon features of contemporary life. Consider the following examples:

- In 1981 Robert Granberg went on a fishing boat with two other men. His companions reported that he fell into the ocean and disappeared. His wife then filed insurance claims for \$6 million. In fact, he jumped overboard, swam ashore, and went to England. The four were eventually indicted.

- An engineer in New Jersey working alone set up a number of fictitious companies, obtained bank loans, and fed false information into a credit card service that one of his "companies" subscribed to. He created records for more than 300 nonexistent people and gave them impeccable credit records. He obtained more than 1,000 credit

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cards. He was able to operate for 4 years and spent \$600,000 before he was stopped.

- Ferdinand Waldo Demara (whom Tony Curtis, aka Bernard Schwartz, pretended to be in the 1960 film *The Great Imposter*) passed himself off as a Royal Canadian Navy surgeon, a monk, a teacher, and an assistant warden of a Texas prison.

- Dorothy Woods, a woman who lived in an 18-room mansion and drove a Rolls-Royce, pleaded guilty to bilking the government out of \$377,500 in welfare, food stamp, and medical payments. She opened 12 welfare claims under phony names and contended she had 49 children.

- A study of medical records in hospitals serving the poor found instances where (according to the record) the same person had undergone both a hysterectomy and a prostate operation for the removal of two appendices.

- In Massachusetts an inspector for the Registry of Motor Vehicles pleaded guilty to selling truck operator licenses.

- A San Francisco man posed as a state fish and game warden for 3 months in 1986 before being discovered. He issued citations and confiscated fish. He said he had always loved fish and wanted to be a game warden.

- In the Boston Brink's holdup, the thieves dressed in police uniforms.

- William Cohn, a novelty shop operator from Miami, took Pan American's advice to go to faraway places. Over a 2-year period he flew to London, Johannesburg, Honolulu, and Hong Kong. Pan Am called it theft of \$40,000 worth of travel since Cohn pretended to be a flight attendant (complete with a uniform), helped the crew, and rode free.¹

- Le Beacon Presse appeared to be a classic business success story. Between 1980 and 1984 its sales increased from \$15 million to \$666 million. That was good enough for 35th place on *Inc.* magazine's list of the 500 fastest-growing companies in the United States. However, the company existed only in the fertile imagination of its creator, Keith Gormezano, a Seattle apartment manager. He obtained listings in *Standard and Poor's* and *Dunn and Bradstreet*. He made up phony documents and in a classic move parlayed one listing into another. He also managed to get himself listed in "Who's Who in Black America," although he is white.

- Patty Hearst, Abbie Hoffman, Jonathan Bingham, and Christo-

At other times he bought tickets at employee discounts. The case was discovered because he was too good. Passengers wrote letters commending his courteous service. The airline became suspicious when it couldn't find his personnel file.

pher Boyce are among hundreds of thousands of fugitives who have avoided detection by creating new identities.

- Angelos Evert, as police chief of Athens during the German occupation in World War II, saved many Jews from arrest and deportation. He issued them identity cards indicating they were Christians.

- The Chicago Better Government Association had two investigators assume the life of winos and move into a skid row flophouse. They registered under such names as James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway. When the voter lists turned up a short time later, Joyce and Hemingway were on them and actually voted.

- Stella Franklin wrote the book *My Brilliant Career* under the name of Miles Franklin. During the blacklisting era in Hollywood many film writers used noms de plume.

- Recently exposed Arizona newspaper publisher Clarence Tully parlayed brief study at Purdue University into a resumé that listed a Purdue degree and a nonexistent Big 10 football career. He presented himself as a lover of the military. He attended military functions with Barry Goldwater, saluted troops, wore medals and a uniform, and claimed to be a retired air force lieutenant colonel and a hero of the Korean war who flew more than 100 missions when recalled to duty during the Vietnam War. In fact, he had never served any time in the military.

- Boston Celtics basketball star Bob Cousy, "the little guy," was always listed in the program as 5' 10" although he actually was 6' 1½".

- The films *Tootsie* and *Victor Victoria* illustrate gender passing for the purpose of obtaining employment.²

- In Los Angeles a tenant received an eviction notice. Unaware of her rights, or that the notice could be challenged, she moved out. She had refused to pay the rent on her apartment after the ceiling in her bedroom fell down and the landlord refused to fix it. The eviction notice led to her being listed in a data base sold to landlords. The woman had a good credit and tenant history and was employed. She went to 15 other apartments but could not find a place to live. One landlord eventually told her she was in the "data base." She eventually found an apartment, but only by changing her name.

A great many other examples could be given: spies and undercover operatives; con artists; racial, ethnic, and religious passers; illegal immigrants with fake documents; transvestites; bigamists; and the more than 4,000 persons given new identities through the Federal

²This may, of course, be institutionalized. Thus, in Albania there was a tradition that if there were no male children, one daughter would be raised as a male.

Witness Protection Program. There may be more than 500,000 Americans who have fraudulent credentials and diplomas—including a possible 10,000 with questionable medical degrees. One in three currently employed Americans may have been hired with credentials that have been altered in some way (Report, 1986).

If it is correct that charity begins at home, so might sociological analysis: What experiences have you had with identity manipulation as either an actor or a victim? Is your vita a perfect reflection of your biography? Are there any salient omissions or embellishments? Have you ever used a ticket or enjoyed a benefit that belonged to someone else and was not to be transferred? Have you ever used an alias (even if for nothing more serious than making a reservation you were not sure you would be able to keep)? Do you know of any cases where a student took an exam for someone else? Did you (or your children) have fake IDs permitting you to buy liquor, although underage? Do you have any married friends who deny they are married when on business trips? Have you ever been in a situation where someone made disparaging remarks about your ethnic group or religion, not realizing you were a member? What would happen if the IRS were to do an in-depth audit of your taxes, looking especially at deductions and unreported income? Do you ever deny who you are when a telephone caller such as a salesperson or a solicitor asks to speak to you? Have you ever been wrongly charged for consumer purchases or telephone calls made by someone else?

The above examples differ markedly from each other in social contexts and dynamics, legality, and ethics. Yet they all involve fraud in the presentation of self and/or biography.

I think the use of fraudulent identity and biography is increasing in the United States, but apart from whether or not that is the case, the topic is well worthy of study. Plato wrote that "all that deceives may be said to enchant." But beyond its intrinsic interest, this issue has implications for justice studies, social theory, democracy, and the quality of life in American society.

The study of fraudulent identity and biography is certainly relevant to the traditional concerns of criminology and victimology, but what does it have to do with justice studies? Justice involves the distribution of privileges or burdens on the basis of rights, needs, or behavior. Fraudulent identification and biography offer a means for thwarting any system of just distributions. When individuals fraudulently establish an entitlement for rights, the documentation of needs, or the accomplishment of deeds, the system of justice is undermined. We feel that "it's not fair."

An important component of this is respectability and disrespect-

ability (Ball, 1970). We anticipate that these will be allocated as warranted and not as a result of the withholding or manipulation of information. Deceptive information deflates the subjective value of both reward and penalty and threatens the legitimacy of the entire system by raising suspicions about its accuracy and thus fairness. The sense of violation felt as a result of being deceived in these matters is usually far worse than is felt as a result of suffering property damage. This negative social response may involve personal betrayal, as well as a sense that a fundamental principle of social order has been trampled.

Our conception of due process involves the idea that the actions of the state will be based on accurate information. In the case of criminal justice, for example, whether the balance is tilted toward punishment and retribution or reform and reintegration, our society values precise information about the individual. The response must fit the criminal as well the crime. The quality of the data on which decisions are made about individuals is a major factor in whether justice is served. Our notion of justice is ill-served when those punished are not guilty, or when the guilty go free, as well as when the deserving are denied, or the undeserving receive, welfare state benefits.

Our ideas about democracy and accountability involve an unprecedented expectation of openness in government. This also extends to personal relations. Our system expects (and even legislates) truth in advertising—whether in products or in selves. This has moral as well as practical underpinnings.

The topic of authenticity in identity goes to the very core of group life, which depends on reciprocity and a degree of trust as central principles. We wish to have confidence that the many people we deal with in secondary relationships are who they say they are and can perform effectively (whether in medicine or in construction). We also believe that people should be true to themselves. Honesty is an important social resource. Yet if honesty is a prime value, it is ironic that much in contemporary industrial society conspires against it.

The topic is theoretically important for understanding modern society. It touches a number of traditional concerns involving deviance and social control, mass society, social psychology, communications, credentials, and technology and society. It can also illuminate the underdeveloped areas of the sociology of deception and surveillance. It offers a good arena to study value conflicts and basic social and psychological processes. By studying the behavior of those who are self-conscious masters at the creation of fraudulent individual and organizational realities, we can gain insight into the more mundane varieties and processes.

Among some of the questions that I find most interesting are these:

• What can be learned from the history of the recording of births, marriages, and deaths and of record keeping by the state more generally (e.g., for taxation and later military draft)? With the rise of the modern state, do rationales become more benign (e.g., an increasing proportion of the data the state collects is to better serve the citizen rather than for the citizen to serve the state)? As wealth increases (along with the possibility of inheriting it) does fraudulent identity increase?³

• As the bureaucratic state's appetite for information increased and as social control became more powerful and efficient in the 19th century (the rise of public and private detectives, improved means of communication such as the telegraph, the appearance of nationally circulated wanted posters, the appearance of supposedly more precise means of physiologically identifying people), did the falsification of ID increase? How do practices vary among those states with and without the Napoleonic code?⁴

• When and why did laws regarding impersonation appear? What is the history of offenses such as forgery, theft by deception, impersonating an officer, tampering with public records, and the misdemeanor of false swearing?

• Given the dramatic elements—the theme is prominent in drama, film, and literature—how do the images and descriptions in art compare to real-life case studies?

• How prevalent is fraudulent identification? What are the characteristics of those social situations which require revelation, documentation, certification, and licensing, or, conversely, which protect the individual's right to conceal information? When must individuals identify themselves and what aspects of biography must be revealed? How does this vary across institutions, functions, countries, and time periods? What mechanisms exist to protect anonymity or to create revelation?

- What are the main types?
- How are fraudulent identities created and discovered?
- Is it correct that the use of fraudulent identification is increasing, and if so, why?

Unfortunately, there are few solid answers to such questions. Why an area that is so important to modern society should be so undevel-

³It is interesting that in the story of Martin Guerre, challenges appear only when the imposter tries to gain property.

⁴I still recall my apprehension in staying in a hotel in Europe for the first time and discovering that I had to surrender my passport in order for it to be collected and checked by the police each night.

oped is an important sociology of knowledge question.⁵ But we have enough data and ideas to define it more systematically. In this exploratory discussion I cannot do justice to the above questions, but I do examine factors encouraging fraudulent presentations and some reasons why they may be increasing, offer some concepts useful in organizing this material, and conclude with some policy choices. The chapter is neither a review of the literature (there is little social science research to review) nor a report of a finished research project. Instead it is an orienting, issue-raising essay that seeks to inspire more systematic research and to help develop middle-range theory.

I have been collecting file material on fake IDs since I wrote a paper for Professor Erving Goffman in 1961 on ethnic passing.⁶ I cast a broad net regarding data sources. The richness of the world (especially when one is interested in studying secret phenomena) requires reliance (with appropriate skepticism) on whatever one can find. The ideas presented here draw from journalistic accounts, novels, interviews, commissions of inquiry, court records, and the how-to-do-it or avoid-it literatures.⁷

The approach differs from that of novelists because of its empirical grounding and concern for cause and explanation. It shares something, particularly in its initial stages, with journalism,⁸ but it goes beyond this because of its depth, its development out of an interest in questions raised by theorists of social order and mass society (e.g., Hobbes, Tocqueville, Weber, Simmel, Wirth, Shils, Foucault, Goffman, and Rule), and an interest in generalizing across cases, societies, and time periods.

⁵Part of the answer lies in secrecy. If it is well executed, it may never be discovered and, hence, its full significance not appreciated. It is also a threatening topic since we want to believe that the world is predictable and what it appears to be.

⁶Goffman's work in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), *Stigma* (1962), and *Frame Analysis* (1974) is directly relevant to the topic at hand.

⁷What this represents is another question. However, I don't think the gap between what is public and what occurs is as great here as in many other areas. This is because of the intrinsic "human interest" that deception entails, the interest victims often have in complaining, and the frequent compulsion to reveal after the fact on the part of perpetrators, or those close to them. Similar methodological issues with respect to data on undercover police are treated in Marx (1988).

⁸I read/skim many general and specialized publications (e.g., *Law Enforcement News*, *Personal Identity Newsletter*, *Privacy Journal*, *Law Enforcement Technology Bulletin*, and *Security World*). I also have participated in an experimental program that brought the AP and NYT wire services over radio waves to my home computer. This was crafted to a number of key words such as *deception*, *undercover*, *fake ID*, and *fraud*. In addition, because I have written on aspects of this topic since 1974 (e.g., Marx, 1974, 1979, 1984), colleagues and others occasionally send me cases.

Some Causal Factors

There are examples of the phenomenon that are bizarre and morally reprehensible. Yet the exotic quality of some cases should not lead us into making too sharp a distinction between fraudulent and honest accounts. Rather than seeing the topic in qualitative black/white terms with clear breaks, we would do best to view it on a continuum, moving slowly and unevenly across contexts and identities (although at some point it is useful to talk of hard- and soft-core varieties). Varying degrees of fraudulent identification and biography are an ordinary (in both a statistical and even a normative sense) feature of life in the United States and perhaps in any industrial society.⁹ Why should this be the case?

As social observers from Simmel to Goffman have noted, in a mass, dynamic, urban society with extensive interaction with strangers and secondary relations, we are forced to rely on formal factors (uniforms, licenses) to establish the identity of many of those with whom we come into contact. Relative to the small village where individuals are well known to each other, the possibilities for fraud are great.

Our culture and socialization encourage it. Growing up involves learning how to conceal and reveal information. To be human means to be able to take the role of the other. The ability to play roles well is seen as an aspect of mental health. The mass media play an important role. The imaginative taking of roles that occurs when we are caught up in a drama is conducive to thinking about one's self as something other than it "really" is. Advertising attempts to make us imagine we are someone else, and often somewhere else doing something else (e.g., the Marlboro Man or the Fortunoff women, or a "new you" suddenly made over by cosmetics, hair dyes, or personal hygiene products, or on a tropical island, or driving a sports car). Our imaginations are permitted (and indeed manipulated into) flights of fantasy with respect to identity that were unthinkable in earlier time periods. Institutionalized mechanisms such as Halloween, costume parties, makeup, and a wardrobe with clothes for many occasions also support it.

Our culture's emphasis on social and geographical mobility accustoms us to the idea of being someone else and generates pressure to be successful and upwardly mobile. The marketplace mentality en-

⁹What Erving Goffman (1962) has observed about stigma (that it is not a unique property of a few individuals but, as both actuality and potential, applies to everyone) also applies to deception in the presentation of information about the self. We all deceive and are deceived. The same also holds for organizational presentations (Altheide & Johnson, 1980).

courages selling selves, as well as products, by placing them in the best possible light. The personal liberty and autonomy that support legitimate exchange and change also support those that are illegitimate. Our expectations of privacy and mechanisms for protecting it provide ample room to omit and alter past biography.

There are many resources available that intentionally or unintentionally aid false presentations. For example, stores that sell or rent uniforms and costumes, mail drops, call-forwarding/phone-answering services, and printing and graphic reproduction services can be used for legitimate or illegitimate ends. Cosmetics and plastic surgery are similar examples. The techniques that change hair color, cover scars, and rearrange facial features are readily available to persons whose motives for altering their appearance goes beyond vanity.¹⁰

There are organizations that sell fake or questionable diplomas. They exploit the ambiguity in credentialing (e.g., who is a religious leader?) and cater to mobility aspirations. Some states do not even have accreditation laws, and "diploma mills" tend to be found there. In an FBI undercover investigation called Dipscam (diploma scam), an agent was able to obtain 17 advanced mail-order degrees in a short period of time for little or no work. As part of an investigation, Florida Congressman Claude Pepper obtained a Ph.D. from "Union University" in Los Angeles by paying \$1,780 and sending in four book reports.

Our tradition of a free press permits an aboveboard how-to-do-it literature. One widely read book called the *Paper Trip*, which has gone through several editions, is a step-by-step guide to creating a new identity. Another called *Ninja 1990* offers clear instructions for how "to change IDs at will/find, hide and transfer fingerprints/get new passports/understand postal covers."

But in addition to these supportive factors, recent changes appear to have resulted in an increase in fraudulent identity. Given the variety of forms and contexts, there are no simple causal relationships. But three broad factors are of particular interest.

If fraudulent identity is increasing, I think to an important extent it can be understood as a function of expansions and contractions in opportunity structures associated with technology and the welfare state.

One aspect of this involves the vast expansion of state benefits

¹⁰For example, concealing creams ("Cover Creme," "Totally Perfect Cover-Up") are waterproof and long-wearing, and cling to scar tissue. They were developed for those with special needs (e.g., persons with disfiguring birthmarks, pigmentation problems, burns, scars). But they also make it possible for persons who might be initially identified by an obvious scar or tattoo to cover it. In Japan, plastic surgery has reportedly been used even to reconstruct hymens in order to conform to expectations regarding brides.

(e.g., pensions, social security, welfare, health, educational loans, unemployment insurance) that have appeared in recent decades. Persons who cannot legally obtain desired benefits have many more opportunities to defraud the state than ever before.

But there has also been a contraction in opportunities for gain, at least in the sense of restrictions on various kinds of employment. There has been pronounced inflation in educational requirements. College credentials are increasingly required for employment that in the past required only a high school diploma.

There has been an increase in the state regulation, licensing, and control of many kinds of work. This is part of the process of credentialization and professionalization. Not only doctors and lawyers, but hairdressers and morticians must be licensed (there is even a move under way to certify sociologists and criminologists). Given the interdependence between social control and rule violation, enhanced efforts at control may lead to new forms (or an escalation) in violations. Restrictions on employment and increased competition may lead to the use of fraudulent documentation on the part of those who wish to pursue a given line of work but who cannot (or choose not to) formally qualify.

Along with the increased importance of credentials have come new ways of obtaining them. Adult education and outreach programs have significantly expanded the chance to obtain certification, even apart from being on a campus and attending classes. In an effort to serve new constituencies we now see aggressive advertising, televised courses, credit for life experience, independent long-distance study under tutors, and "external degrees." In a phenomenon well known to students of deviance, the extension of legitimate programs creates an opportunity for deceptive operations to purvey their goods as well.

Another restrictive factor that can cause deception is an increase in requirements to divulge information about one's self. As the power and reach of the state and private organizations have grown, more and more information about individuals is in data bases beyond their control. The mandatory provision of personal information is central to the operation of all industrial states. In Sweden, which is often pointed to as the wave of the future, the average adult is in over 100 government data bases. The Swedish citizen is identified in these data bases by a personal ID number given to all persons at birth and which can never be changed. There are benign justifications for this (whether protecting the state or the individual). Yet individuals may find that dossiers thwart their personal goals.

Along with requirements to provide information has come a contraction in the ability to hide one's past that was present before wide-

spread computerization. With the instant availability of computerized information—regardless of whether it is inaccurate or accurate and discrediting¹¹—persons may now feel a need to lie about things that in the past were unseen, overlooked, or forgotten. The tightening of the informational net or noose generates structural pressures to fabricate.

The role of technology is complicated and contradictory and overflows the boundaries of any simple theory. On the one hand, biometric forms of identification are adopted precisely because it is believed they are almost impossible to fake (e.g., fingerprints, retinal patterns, palm prints, DNA sequencing—nucleic acid extracted from hair, blood, or semen; computer typing rhythms, signature verification, implanted or manually carried chips or electronic beepers).¹² The elaborate cross-checking of computer data bases makes it possible to verify claimants' stories and hence may identify or deter fraud.

Such devices make it possible to inexpensively and rapidly verify identification and claims. To the extent that near-perfect means of identification are implemented (a very different factor from developing them in the laboratory) we would then expect at least some types of fraud to decline (although systems still might be compromised by bribing or coercing those in positions of authority).

Of course, in a free market economy, means of neutralization may also be available and technologies may be used in ways unintended by their developers. We also can identify some ways in which technology is making document fraud easier.

Computer technology offers rich possibilities for fraud. A document scanner can "read" a picture and "draw" a copy into the memory of the computer. Laser techniques are used to convert the image to digital data. A copying machine developed by Xerox for the Department of Defense as a tool in high-speed map making can also make good copies of dollar bills and driver's licenses.

It is also possible to rearrange images. Document scanners and fast color printers make it easy to fake images and documents. Through digital retouching, computer-generated images can be combined in new ways, unwanted images can be deleted, and colors can be added and changed.

¹¹Persons who in the past could deceive without altering their identity or biography now find that this is no longer possible. In this sense the basic fraud may not increase, but the use of false IDs to carry it out may.

¹²Cows are now being implanted with identification chips as protection against rustlers. Brands can be altered more easily, but chips are harder to locate and change. A patent has been issued for a locational implant in children that sends out an electronic signal (e. g. implanted in a tooth cavity).

Against the already supportive conditions of a mass society with extensive interaction with strangers, changes in the way we communicate on balance are also making it easier to pull off deception. With the joining of computer and communications technologies, face-to-face interaction is significantly supplemented by interaction that is mediated by distance and time. It is not only that those with whom we interact are strangers, they are not even in our physical presence. As physical location lessens in its importance to interaction, opportunities for fraud increase. Consider, for example, changing records via remote entry. Where remote computer access is possible, the change can occur without even breaking and entering.¹³

In considering the range of factors that are supportive of or encourage fraudulent identification and biography, the question might be rephrased to "Why is it that the manipulation of identification does not occur even more often?"

Types and Dimensions

What are the major forms, types, and cross-cutting dimensions found in fraudulent ID and biography? Given the diversity of the phenomenon, classification is an essential first step.

One means of classification is simply to follow popular descriptive categories. These usually involve a motive, a category of person, or the aspect of identity that is involved. For example, in the beginning of the chapter a number of basic garden-variety types were mentioned (e.g., spies, con artists, occupational and professional imposters, racial passers). Such categories are descriptively but not analytically very helpful. They help define the universe of cases, yet they mix dimensions that should be separated and do not lead to hypotheses. In what follows, I suggest 22 dimensions that can be used for classification. These can aid us in asking comparative questions with respect to different forms, time periods, groups, and societies, and they offer building blocks for hypotheses

1. *Scope*: comprehensive or singular
2. *Temporal*: permanent or temporary
3. *Nature of the deception*: performance (behavior) versus non-performance (claims regarding identity and biography)

If the latter, this may involve claims about

¹³Entry may also be direct, as in the case of a scandal at USC where employees at the computer center sold everything from grade changes to diplomas.

a. *location* (birthplace, residency to avoid out-of-state tuition or obtain some other benefit, or naturalized citizenship given recent immigration law)

b. *temporal*—date or time (birthdate, back-dated documents)

c. *entry/exclusion markers* (tickets, passes, passports, stamps on the hand)

d. *competency* (experience, health)

This list could be greatly extended. The issue is what element(s) is or are fraudulently presented, how this is distributed, and what the varying dynamics, scenarios, and sanctions are. Are achieved criteria more likely to be used than ascribed? A number of commonsensical hypotheses can be identified: It is easy to obtain a fake college degree or social security number or other counterfeit documents, and relatively difficult to fake a change in gender or race; it is easier to fake accounts regarding past biography than to perform in a current role.

4. Documents used: yes no

If yes, does the fraud involve a fake document, or a "real" record that is used inappropriately? Is the document a full counterfeit (no such person exists) or is it a genuine document that is fraudulently used or changed (e.g., using an older sibling's ID, a stolen credit card, or a birth certificate of someone who died as a child and is about the same age as the person using it)? This is on the same level as when a "genuine" document is altered; e.g., eye color or race is changed, or a picture of the user is added. Situations where the individual uses his or her own ID fraudulently can be separated from those where someone else's ID is used.

It is easiest to create a paper trail using a real person's birth record or social security number. Yet that also can increase the likelihood of eventual discovery. The systemic and reciprocal aspects are particularly interesting when the fake ID is taken from a real person.

When a person uses the identity of someone else who is living, this often has consequences for the latter. The two are joined in a bizarre connection wherein the person whose ID is fraudulently used is held responsible for the behavior of the usurper. At the simplest level this may involve nothing more than unwarranted charges on a credit card bill. Yet the consequences can be more dire, as with arrests—for example, the case of an Eastern Airlines stewardess who

was arrested and held for 5 days as a result of someone's using her identification, which had been stolen a decade before. A Detroit man has been arrested six times as a result of crimes committed by a person who stole his wallet. He was eventually advised by police to change his name to avoid the problem.

5. *Initiator: the actor or others*

My interest is primarily in cases voluntarily initiated by the actor or subject. However, there are other forms of fraudulent IDs and records that are involuntary from the actor's perspective and that are initiated by others. The actor may be unaware of the fraud. Some gullible people (recent immigrants seem to be disproportionately victimized) are apparently duped into believing that job training and certification programs (often of short duration and inexpensive) qualify them to do things they cannot. Or children kidnapped when they are very young may be given a new identity. Medical personnel may not report the seriousness of a patient's illness. Governments in disinformation, propaganda, and counterintelligence campaigns may create fake records regarding an individual or events. Dirty-tricks political campaigns are another example.

We usually think about fraudulent identities and biographies as things that are strategically put forth by the actor. Yet from Kafka and Orwell to contemporary practices, we have instances where the state and others have the ability to alter the paper record of our biographies and to rewrite history. We assume that the state usually won't alter records, particularly about living individuals, but recent history suggests the opposite, although there is enormous variation among countries.

Implicit here is attention to the issue of blame and responsibility. Is the actor duped, culpable, or heroic?

Errors in record keeping might also be considered here. These also share a profound gap between reality as it is known to be correct by those involved and the image presented to the public, even if intentionality and secrecy are absent.

6. *Expressed motives when perpetrator is the actor:*

- a. obtain a bureaucratic benefit or avoid a penalty
- b. hide from your past
- c. protect privacy/anonymity
- d. fun, a prank, or a challenge
- e. test a system (Goffman terms this "the vital test")

- f. aggression, sabotage
- g. obtain information, pretense interviews, infiltration

Attention must be paid to accounts, grammars, and rhetorics. Motivation is, of course, a tricky variable. It is rarely singular and may change over the course of an event. Actors cannot always be trusted to give correct accounts, and they may not be fully aware of their motives. It can also divert attention away from structural and process variables. Yet one aspect of any comprehensive analysis must attend to the meaning people give to their behavior. One can sometimes usefully distinguish between public explanations that legitimize the behavior and more private reasons.

7. *Implemented via: commission or omission*

Is there a conscious and planned effort to deceive, or is the individual simply taking advantage of the inherent ambiguity in language and many social situations to create erroneous impressions? Much short-run ethnic passing tends to be via omission. The individual simply doesn't look or act the way members of his or her group are stereotypically believe to act. Commission requires greater effort and is generally seen as morally more suspect.

8. *Nature of the rules violated: legal (criminal or civil) or norms*

There are important historical issues here and this changes over time. This is part of the folkways/stateways issue. Does law respond to, or help create morality? There can be a cyclical pattern. For example, ethnic passing in ascriptive societies was probably first an ethical violation that eventually became codified into law that was later repealed or weakened. India, Germany, Japan, the United States, and South Africa can be usefully contrasted here. There appears to be enormous cultural variation in how this is viewed and in the "room" social orders offer for both legitimate and illegitimate changes in identity.

9. *Societal response: sanctioned to tolerated to supported*

10. *Audience behavior: accept to suspect to reject*

Such presentations do not occur in a vacuum. They are interactive and dynamic and must be seen as a form of communication with an intended audience. Audience response is an important variable and may interact in a dynamic way with the perceptions of the actor. Awareness contexts suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1964) can be usefully applied here.

11. *Direction of the change:* a. to higher or lower status
b. entry or exit
c. restorative or new condition

a. We usually think of movement from a lower to a higher status (from black or Hispanic to white and Anglo), yet there are instances of the reverse. In India, some higher-caste persons claim to be untouchables to gain benefits set aside for them. Sometimes the boss's son or daughter will go to work in a manual position under an assumed name.

b. Is the goal of the actor and surveillance agents to keep people in or out? Levi-Strauss writes of control via vomiting out or taking in.

c. This probably affects the morality. For example, a doctor whose license is removed and continues to practice may not be viewed as harshly as someone who plays the doctor role and did not graduate from medical school or never had a license. For the actor, neutralization of the prohibitions against doing this are probably easier for the latter. Formerly licensed doctors may define themselves as still doctors. The case of the New York model whose face was cut and who has undergone plastic surgery and wears cover-up makeup is also an example. It is not clear that she is projecting a fraudulent identity. She can be viewed as trying to create what was once hers. But the same logic does not apply to a dark-skinned person who uses skin lighteners, or a person who undergoes plastic surgery to obtain a more Nordic look. There can be a tension in the cultural emphasis to be all you can be, make yourself over versus being yourself, accepting your identity.

12. *Degree of skill and resources required:* high or low
13. *Availability of role models:* many or few
14. *Directionality:* reversible or irreversible

Contrast an undercover operation where, with appropriate selection, training, and supervision, the person can come out of the role and resume a traditional enforcement role with a sex change (though what those who have such operations "are" and whether there is any deception is open to interpretation).

15. *Social network/organizations required:* yes no

Does the perpetrator act alone or with others? Much more complex forms of deception are possible with the support of a social network, but the likelihood of discovery increases proportionally.¹⁴

¹⁴The Federal Witness Protection program is a very worthwhile topic for study here. The underground railroad that helped slaves gain freedom is another nice example.

16. *Discovery:* inherent or indefinitely concealable

Some cases have a self-destruct/disclosure quality with a necessary progression to discovery. In con games, the mark is likely to eventually find out he or she has been taken—the ocean-view land is under water, the Brooklyn Bridge is owned by someone else, the request to withdraw money to test a suspected teller was not part of a bank plan. Most undercover operations with prosecution as a goal also are discovered. In contrast, "intelligence moles" may remain in place for a lifetime. Many religious and ethnic passers are never discovered. (How many people knew Cary Grant was of Jewish parents?)

17. *Pace:* sudden or gradual

There may be a gradual process of testing the waters and slowly moving into a fake ID, or there can be a radical break. There are parallels to the process of assuming a deviant identity and changing self-conception. Goffman's work on the moral career is useful here.

18. *Interaction:* face-to-face or mediated

Does the self-presentation involve a face-to-face encounter or does it involve paper records presented at a distance (via mail, computer modems, telephone conversations)? The possibilities for deception are much greater when the fraud is at a distance and involves abstracted, disembodied data images. The sociology of the *nom de plume* applies here.

19. *Does the event actually occur:* no yes

This is a fascinating aspect and we lack a vocabulary to adequately capture it. It is relatively easy to define nonoccurrence and to capture the essence of the deception. But when an event occurs, but is still fraudulent, there may be definitional problems. Although it occurs, it does so in such a fashion as to render it inauthentic if the outside observer were to know what the perpetrator does. Contrast a "fake" marriage certificate used as a means of gaining citizenship. In some cases the marriage never occurs and counterfeit documents and/or entries are made. In other cases the marriage does "occur," a man and wife fill out forms, present a blood test, pay the fee, and are married. Yet in some cases, for the partner who is a citizen, this is done as a business for a fee; in other cases, the citizen may be duped. Insurance fraud offers similar definitional questions. Thus, the car that a person arranges to have "stolen" in order to collect insurance is really missing and likely broken up into its basic parts. The perpetrator of insurance fraud who had a friend cut off his foot with an ax is

For consideration of a contemporary "underground railroad" that helps battered women create new lives, see Ferraro and Johnson (1985).

really missing a foot, even if he claimed it happened in a motorcycle accident. The ambiguity of language offers rich possibility for exploiting "real occurrences" that, nevertheless, are not what they appear to be with respect to identity and biography.

20. *Is a fraudulent role actually performed:* yes no

For example, college professor Paul Arthur Crafton had 34 aliases. He had 70 credit cards (including 4 American Express gold cards) and five driver's licences. When arrested, he was teaching at three different colleges under different names. He was commuting hundreds of miles a week between Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania. This obviously requires greater skill and perhaps energy than the mediated identity deception that relies only on paper claims, or where a fake ID is presented for entry or exit.¹⁵

21. *Origin:* strategic or mental illness

My interest is primarily in strategic, voluntary uses by the actor for a motive that can be conventionally understood in terms of the categories in number 6 above. But with respect to social processes, much could also be learned from looking at neurological cases such as those described in *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (Sax, 1986), or the studies of multiple personalities.

22. *Object:* a. human or nonhuman
b. individual or organization

a. My interest is primarily in human identity, but some attention could usefully be devoted to nonhuman examples, such as fake pedigrees for animals (dogs, cats, horses). I saw one dog that had its owner's social security number tattooed under his leg. This was registered with the National Dog Registry. Another example involves fake certifications for artifacts such as antiquities, pottery, and paintings. There is a market and incentives for clones to appear once an artist's work becomes well known. It may also be more common for deceased than for living artists. A related area is the fake labeling of mass-produced products, such as Vuitton luggage, blue jeans, and automobile parts. Copyright and trademark violations could be compared to violations involving identity. To what extent do fraud laws differentiate claims

¹⁵Crafton illustrates the ever-precarious nature of social control. Earlier in his career he patented a number of devices, including one used to verify credit card users. Authorities also had trouble "bringing up" his fingerprints because they were so light. That rare condition is usually found only in persons who spend years with their hands immersed in water, such as cement finishers.

Table 1. Four Types of Fraudulent Identity Based on Scope and Time

Time	Scope	
	Comprehensive	Singular
Permanent	1. Fugitives Ethnic passers	2. Denial of arrest record, some religious passers
	3. Deep undercover operations	4. Teenagers and fake IDs

for the human versus the nonhuman? Many of the same factors that produce increases in the former may operate for the latter.

b. The little existing research has focused primarily on individuals. Yet the topic of fake organizational presentations offers a rich mine. A focus on complex con games or police stings requires attention to organizational as well as individual presentations. The CIA offers a classic case where proprietary fronts (e.g., Southern Air) have been used extensively. Considerable information on this can be found in scattered places. What are the major parallels and differences between fake personal and organizational presentations?

One could go on and list more dimensions, and I apologize for the dizzying impact of throwing a list at the reader. A next step is to decide which are most important and how various values of these may occur in a patterned way. Some basic ideal types can be created by combining dimensions. I offer four tables that I think capture some of the most essential features (or at least the features I find of most interest).

Thus, if we think about the scope and temporal aspects, we have Table 1. New issues and contingencies appear as we move from cell 1, the hard-core behavior that tends to involve complete sociological death and rebirth, to the soft core behavior of cell 4.

Another relevant table involves responses to genuine and fraudulent ID. If we combine audience response with whether the ID is fraudulently or correctly used, we have the typology shown in Table 2.

There are many interesting cases, such as pretenders to thrones and inheritances (Anastasia, Howard Hughes's long-lost relatives). Some of the same dynamics apply even though, in such cases, it is often

Table 2. Audience Response and the Authenticity of Identification

Is ID	Do others	
	Accept	Reject
Correct	1. Most common (gender)	2. Less common (Arthur Miller's play <i>Focus</i> , people of age who look young and find their IDs are not believed, people who don't believe undercover or plainclothes police are police)
	3. Common (successful deception)	4. Common (effective control mechanisms) fake IDs don't always work
Fake		

impossible to know where to classify them on the vertical axis since the dispute is about whether they are fake or correct.

Table 3 involves relating what the audience really believes, or knows to be true, to its behavior. This will not always be consistent with overt behavior. In primary relations, and where there is economic advantage for the intended audience, we might expect greater inconsistency.

Cell 4 applies to incentives to project fraudulent IDs and for potential control agents to collude. Liquor stores and bars, for example, have an economic incentive to not look too closely at the IDs they are

Table 3. Audience Beliefs and Behavior

Does audience act consistently regarding the belief?	Does audience believe ID to be valid?	
	Yes	No
Yes	1. Ordinary behavior	2. Failure (from view of holder of the ID)
	3. Criminal justice framing and cover-ups	4. Collusion, intimidation (M. Guere's wife, some liquor vendors)
No		

Table 4. Document Authenticity and Quality of Role Performance

Effective role performance	Fraudulent documents	
	Yes	No
Yes	1. Thought-provoking	2. Expected pattern
	3. Incompetent impostors	4. Incompetent professionals
No		

shown. If a credit card is valid, merchants get paid, even if the person using the card has no right to use it. For many situations of false ID, there is a parallel to the relative indifference of the insurance industry to fraud, since costs are diffused and passed on to the consumer. Such externalities reduce the incentive for vigilance.

If we combine whether or not fraudulent documents are used to gain access to playing a role with the quality of the role performance, we gain insight into the important issue of formal versus substantive legitimacy. Such a typology calls attention to what can be the self-serving nature of credentialing and encourages thinking about the relationship between performance and documentation (see Table 4). Placing cases in cells 3 and 4 is less complicated for some groups, such as brain surgeons, than for others, such as barbers or teachers.

Drawing the Line Somewhere

The topic raises issues that go beyond social science in a strict sense to questions of justice, democracy, mobility, and the rights of the individual as against the needs of the state. There are tough public policy questions and trade-offs here.

As automated biometric and object (e.g., autos) identification devices become more efficient and inexpensive, their use will expand. As the cost of computing declines, the demand for ever-increasing amounts of personal data will increase. Credentialing, too, marches onward. The topic is likely to become more salient as a public issue; for example, note the 1986 immigration law with its documentation requirements and the concern over identifying carriers of AIDS. Attention to how the issue has evolved in the last decade can give us a glimpse of the future and the choices we have to shape it.

Chesterton wrote that art is like life and you have to draw the line somewhere. This holds as well for public policy. What degree of risk

and disorder do we want to accept in return for maximizing liberty and privacy? We want an efficient and secure society and quality treatment from doctors and electricians. We don't want to see needed benefit programs bankrupt the society because they are shamelessly exploited, and we don't want to put Dracula in charge of the blood bank. We also want a society where, if you have paid a debt, your present behavior is what should count. We want to emphasize achieved not ascribed criteria, and we want to encourage innovation and change. Yet we can't maximize all of these.

As citizens of a democratic society who value equity and liberty, privacy, and a degree of order, how should we view the insatiable demand for more information and documentation and intrusive technologies? Can we have a decent, reasonably efficient, yet loose society? Can we have an open and tolerant society that encourages changes and choices about identity without, at the same time, creating license for rampant and destructive fraudulent identity? Must we choose between the extremes of anarchy and repression?

How leaky or tight do we want our social order to be? To what extent and when and where do we want to extend visibility, accountability, and mandatory disclosure? When do we want to enhance privacy and insulate social actions and personal pasts from visibility? We clearly need better ways to think about these issues and criteria for sorting out what is at stake.

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