In "Prestige and intimacy", what are the costs to the women of incorrectly interpreting the men's signals? Of believing deceptive signals? What are the benefits to the women of signaling deceptively? The costs?

If women believe deceptive signals the popularity/attractiveness signals of men, they may lose social standing with their female and male friends since they may be seen being treated badly or simply because they would be affiliated with a lower-status individual. Of course, the same goes for males as well. If women signal deceptively (such as pretending to be out so that they will miss a call from their boyfriend), they are also raising their prestige possibly at the expense of their male target. Still, this takes some effort to maintain and if discovered could significantly lower status.

If a woman correctly interprets a man’s signals it can result not only in embarrassment but also a lowering of status. If, for example, a woman misinterprets a man’s signals as being friendly/interested but his is not the case, the woman could risk rebuke from the man as well as her peers when these signals are not reciprocated.

It is easy to conclude that all signals online are purely conventional - but is this too simple an interpretation? Examine some of the examples in Jacobson's article - are the signals purely conventional or are there assessment aspects to them also? What are they?

Online signals appear to be partly conventional, but that is only a part. For example, so people want to signal scholarly knowledge so they allude to literature, something that is done in traditional face-to-face interaction as well. This is clearly an assessment signal. However, you can actually choose your name in many online spaces and this introduces an unusual mode for signaling. How you spell your name (upper or lower case), what words go into your name, what goes into your profile description, all of these signal what groups you belong to in a very direct way, leaving the reader to imagine what you’re actually like and normally forming an overly positive impression of the writer. All of these actions are in fact conventional signals.

In person observation:

Looks sort of like a business woman reading a newspaper (wearing a suit jacket and a nicer shirt and slightly stylish glasses), but since we’re at MIT she’s probably in Sloan. At second glance she looks younger, maybe a senior going to job interviews. Actually that seems most likely. She’s probably less engineering oriented given her barebones Mac laptop, and she wears a brass rat on her finger which indicates that she has a need to signal that part of her identity.

She doesn’t actually handle her utensils that, well, which gives me the impression that she hasn’t had much business or professional experience. She looks somewhat intelligent, probably because of the glasses, but that she might be slightly insecure (possibly because of her small frame). I feel like if I verbally attacked an idea she had she wouldn’t be able to withstand it.
Clearly she wants to signal her affiliation with MIT with the brass rat, and her choice of stylish but professional clothes probably signals a seriousness as well as a professional candor. This seems close to the persona that I perceived, but she probably didn’t want to project the insecurity that comes with wearing a brass rat. The need to signal that kind of information may signal a deficiency in another area.

I guess I’m bringing to bear a lot of my experience with women with slight builds, since they tended to be conversational pushovers and with my experiences with people who wear the brass rat, although that is less so since I know many people who wear the brass rat who are just fiercely proud of their MIT affiliation but lack insecurity.

- Comparison

Drew didn’t think she was a student: graduated recently
- Appearance, taking lots of time, no sense of urgency or anything to do – not student-ish
- Not looking up at all – not expecting to run into anybody
- Gone out to work and came back to interview people or meet professors
- Still had a backpack, and she was pretty young so she couldn’t have been gone for too long
- Maybe the Macbook was her personal machine

- Online observation

I get the impression that he hasn’t actually accomplished a lot. He lists a lot of his affiliations with various prestigious computer science programs, but other than creating a toolkit most of the descriptions say that he was “working on” something. He still looks fairly young in his picture, though, which probably also leads me to believe that he hasn’t done a lot. The site itself also has a very basic design, indicating a lack of technical knowledge.

He’s obviously trying to emphasize his affiliations with other universities, and there’s surprisingly little about the work he’s done at his current institution, so it seems like he wants to focus more on the past, which he appears to do effectively. He clearly doesn’t want to project that he’s technically lacking, however.

- Comparison

Drew also looked at his other website pages, but it seems like we got to roughly the same conclusions. I did, however, focus a little more on his affiliation with other universities.