The Employment Interview: Advancements in and Recommendations for Research and Practice

The Center for Business and Economic Development
Auburn University Montgomery

How to Develop a Structured Interview

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Three Stages of Structured Interview Development

- **Pre-Development** (Job Analysis, Definition of Test Content Domain)
- **Development** (Brainstorming Questions & Response Standards, SME Review, Rating Interview Questions)
- **Post-Development** (Administration, Scoring)

Pre-Development Stage- *Job Analysis*

- **Job analysis necessary to ensure job-relatedness of structured interview questions**

- **Full job analysis including site observations, SME brainstorming meetings, questionnaire development and administration, and data analysis**

- **Documentation of content validation effort is essential**

Pre-Development Stage-
Test Content Domain

- **Pre-determined screens**
- **Eligible work behaviors and KSAs**
- **KSAs amenable to measurement**
- **Measurable by structured interview**
- **Structured interview test budget**

Measurement Strategy

KSA/Relative Weight	Measurable by Interview	Measurement Constraint	Other Measurement Method
A1. A to communicate verbally/19.5	Yes		
A2. A to adjust level of communication to the level of understanding of the audience/25.5	No		Role play or group discussion
A3. A To Present information in an organized and effective manner/25.5	Yes		
A4. A to think clearly in crisis situations/24.0	No	Yes	
K1. K of department policy regarding/15.5	Yes		

Development Stage

- **Initial Development Meeting**
- **SMEs Brainstorm Critical Incidents & Questions**
- **Review and Revision of Questions**
- **SMEs Brainstorm Response Standards**
- **Review and Revision of Response Standards**
- **Final SME Review and Revisions**
- **SME Ratings of Interview Questions**
- **Selection of Final Questions**

Development Stage-
Initial Development Meeting

- **Confidentiality Statements**
- **Review job analysis results**
- **Review test budget**
- **Discuss which can be measured by structured interview**

Development Stage-
Brainstorming Critical Incidents

- **SMEs generate critical incidents for possible question development as a group by responding to analysts' questions concerning each performance dimension.**

- **A list of critical incident ideas for each KSA/performance dimension should be recorded by an analyst. Where possible, related ideas should be combined.**

- **The critical incident ideas should be discussed by the SME panel and the most appropriate selected for question development.**

- **Taking each of the selected critical incidents in turn, SMEs should collectively discuss and sketch out in draft form the details of a question for the structured interview. SMEs should be instructed that the questions should be appropriate for the entry-level.**

- **Finally, SMEs discuss question drafts, combining ideas into a question for the structured interview. Questions can be designed to measure multiple dimensions within each question.**

Development Stage- *Characteristics of Good Questions*

- The question should require the candidate to describe actual behavior in his or her response.
- The question should be open-ended and call for more than a simple "yes" or "no" or a statement of facts. This type of question requires the applicant to do most of the talking during the interview.
- The question should be realistic and practical.
- The question should deal with important aspects of the job.
- The question should be phrased in the working language of the job.
- The question should call for job-knowledge or present a job-related problem or situation.
- The question should not be leading.
- The question should not involve moral judgments.
- The question should be able to distinguish among candidate competency levels.

Development Stage-
Question Review & Revision

- **Is it directly related to the KSAs?**

- **Is it realistic?**

- **Is it appropriate to expect entry-level employees to provide an acceptable response?**

- **Is it accurate, complete, and unambiguous**

- **Is if free from bias (race, gender, cultural)?**

Development Stage-*Response Standards*

- **Developed with minimally competent entry-level employee as primary anchor point**
- **Clearly Unacceptable-response results in ineffective handling of situation (omission of critical elements or introduction of inappropriate elements)**
- **Clearly Acceptable-contains only elements critical to effectively handling situation (expected from "minimally competent" entry-level employee**
- **Clearly Superior-contains most or all elements of Clearly Acceptable plus elements over and above what is expected from "minimally competent" entry-level employee**

Development Stage- *Response Standards Review*

- **SMEs should review and revise the response standards**
- **Review for compliance with previous criteria**

Development Stage-
Final Review and Revision

- **Review for accuracy and completeness**
- **Make necessary refinements**
- **Review grouping of response standards for relevance to KSAs/dimensions**

Development Stage-
Rating Interview Questions

- **Job-relatedness**
- **Extent question distinguishes between levels of competence**
- **Quality of question (i.e., too easy, too hard , biased, ambiguous, inaccurate, good item)**
- **Dimension or KSA linkage**

Development Stage-
Selection of Final Questions

- **Establish criteria for question rating results**
- **Subject matter of questions**
- **Adequate sampling of KSAs/dimensions**

Post-Development Stage-*Administration*

- **Standardized instructions**
- **All candidates answer same questions or parallel questions**
- **Read questions to candidates**
- **Standardized preparation and response time**

Post-Development Stage- *Scoring*

- **Trained assessors or raters**
- **Rating errors**
- **Using rating forms**
- **Applying response standards**
- **Observing and recording behavior**
- **Classifying behavior into dimensions**
- **Record of behavior (i.e., assessor notes, video tape)**

Developing a Structured Interview for Organizational Citizenship Behaviors

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Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs)

■ **"Discretionary tasks that individuals take on, or behaviors they exhibit that are not necessarily part of their jobs, but are very beneficial to their work output or workgroup. In other words, OCBs are employee behaviors that benefit the organization, but are not necessarily part of someone's job description."**

Organizational Setting

- **Large State agency**
- **160 unique job classifications**
- **Several thousand employees**

Design Considerations

- **Applicability to all classifications**
- **Availability when needed**
- **Test security**
- **Consent decree considerations**

Step 1: Group Job Classifications

- **EEOC codes**
- **Management team review/revision**
- **Management**
- **Professional/Technician**
- **Skilled Crafts/Service Maintenance**
- **Clerical/Paraprofessional**

Step 2: SME Selection

- **Supervisors of the classifications**
- **Race and gender**
- **Location**
- **Permanent appointments**
- **8 per group**
- **Supervised as many classifications as possible**
- **Not likely to be interviewed**

Step 3: Critical Incident Sessions

- **Outlined purpose**
- **Provided the definition of OCB**
- **"Describe a time when you saw one of your subordinates do (or fail to do) something that you considered to be beyond what was really required of him/her on the job that really benefited your organization, division, or bureau."**

Step 3: Critical Incident Sessions

- **"Think of someone who works for you that you consider your most outstanding (or least effective) employee. Aside from technical competence, what characteristics make this person outstanding (or ineffective)? Give an example of when they demonstrated each of those characteristics."**

Step 3: Critical Incident Sessions-Example

- **"An employee saw that the department had no department-wide system for backing up computer files. Without being asked, the employee went out and checked with vendors about back-up systems and recommended a system for the department. He also volunteered to set up the system and keep it running. This included taking the tapes off-site for safety in case of fire. As a result, the department has a more efficient means of backing up files."**

Dimensions of OCB

Successful Task Completion

- **Taking actions necessary to complete tasks in both a quality and time-conscious manner. Individuals who demonstrate high levels of these behaviors show extraordinary concern for completing their assigned tasks in a manner that exceeds basic, minimum expectations.**

Dimensions of OCB

Organizational Initiative

■ **Taking extraordinary action to anticipate and solve problems, contribute to the productivity of the work unit, develop one's job-related skills, or improve methods for completing work. Individuals who demonstrate high organizational initiative look for opportunities to contribute positively to the work group.**

Dimensions of OCB

Helping and Cooperating with Others

- **Working cooperatively with others in order to benefit the entire organization. Individuals who demonstrate high levels of these behaviors look for opportunities to help others and volunteer to assist or train others, even if they are not asked to do so. Further, they are willing to volunteer assistance, even if it requires them to work additional hours or make other person sacrifices.**

Dimensions of OCB

Following Organizational Rules/Policies

- **Consistently complying with the rules and policies of the organization or workgroup. Individuals who demonstrate high levels of these behaviors consistently meet work rules and reliably complete their tasks as they are assigned.**

Dimensions of OCB

Endorsing, Supporting, and Defending Organizational Objectives

- **Consistently demonstrating commitment to the organization or work unit both in word and action. Individuals who demonstrate high levels of these behaviors work to contribute to the success of the organization's objectives, regardless of the climate/morale of the organization. Further, they speak positively about the organization, despite what others say.**

Step 4: OCB Survey

- **Behavioral statements**

- **Incumbents and supervisors**

- **Rated importance, extent benefits**

- **Results used to determine whether questions/response standards were appropriate for all classifications**

Step 5: Structured Interview Question Development

- **Developed from critical incidents**
- **Drafted behavior description and situational questions**
- **Reviewed questions with SMEs:**

1) **Realistic for all classifications in the grouping**

2) **Reasonable (e.g., appropriate difficulty) and fair**

3) **Clear and unambiguous**

4) **Good question overall**

5) **Applicable to anyone who would be interviewing for a position in one of these classifications***

Sample Question

- **"You are hired for a new position in this organization which requires you to interact with outside agencies which file paperwork with your organization. Your first day on the job you receive calls from two individuals complaining about the process required to file this paperwork. Your coworker tells you that your predecessor set up this specific paperwork process because the information gathered is important. You are now on the phone with yet a third frustrated caller who says she can't even figure out how to complete the first of four forms your organization has asked her to complete. She says this process is a complete waste of time."**

Step 6: Response Standards Development

Clearly Superior

- **Gather together representatives from your organization and each outside organization to determine whether you can better design the documentation process while getting all necessary information.**

Clearly Acceptable

- **Assist the caller in completing the paperwork**

Clearly Unacceptable

- **Tell the caller that she is the third person to complain today, and that your organization has created a bad system.**

Step 7: SMEs Rate the Interview

- **1) Is this question related to good citizenship in this organization?**
- **2) Given two applicants with equal technical competence for a job in these classifications, would the ability to do better on this question make the person a better potential employee?**
- **3) Quality of the question**
- **4) Question-dimension linkages**
- **5) Is this an important question to ask a job applicant?**
- **Identified which questions would be included.**

Step 8: Language and Expert Review

Independent review of:

■ **Questions**

■ **Response Standards**

Revisions made

Administration and Scoring

- **Sample of questions will be selected for each interview**

- **Questions will represent all dimensions of OCB**

- **Candidates receive an information guide describing the interview process**

Administration and Scoring

- **Panel interviews**
- **Raters score each interview response using the predetermined response standards**
- **Candidates will receive a score for each interview question**
- **Question scores will be averaged to create an overall interview score**

Recent Research on the Employment Interview

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What has research shown us about the interview?

- **How do I develop an interview?**
  - **What drives the questions I ask?**
- **Format**
  - **Structured vs. Unstructured**
- **Number of interviewers**
  - **Panel vs. Single Interviewer**
- **Do demographic variables have any influence on the outcome?**

Purpose of the Current Study

- **To examine the effects of assessor race and racial composition of an interview panel on evaluations of the responses of interviewees of the same or different race than the assessor, using a structured interview format.**

Overview of Current Study

- **Large law enforcement agency in Southeast**

- **Videotaped interview responses of candidates for police sergeant**

- **Used responses of 36 White males and 36 Black males**

- **Interview classified as a *Structure IV* interview (Huffcutt and Arthur, 1994)**

Methodology

- **Subjects**
- **Assessor Training Program**
- **Each of three days subjects randomly assigned to a five four-person panel**
- **Rating Process**
- **Post assessment questionnaire**

Hypothesis 1

- **Mean candidate interview scores will differ as a joint function of the race of the candidate and the race of the interviewer with assessors giving more favorable evaluations to candidates of the same race (as the assessor) than to candidates of a race different from the assessor.**

- **Theoretical Basis**
  - **Similar-to-me theory**
  - **Social identity theory**

Hypothesis 1

- **Analysis**
  - **T-test comparing the average of mean Black overall final assessor ratings less mean White overall final assessor ratings for each Black candidate and the average of mean Black overall final assessor ratings less mean White overall final assessor ratings for each White candidate.**

Hypothesis 1 - Results

Candidate Race	N	Mean	SD	P
Black	37	.12	.26	
White	36	-.09	.33	
				.0025

Hypothesis 2

- **Mean candidate interview scores will differ as a function of racial composition of the interview panel.**

- **Theoretical Basis**
  - **Similar-to-me**
  - **Social identity extended to panel situations**

Hypothesis 2

- **Analyses: Nested effects ANOVA**
  - Candidate race (i.e., black or white)
  - Panel type (i.e., BBBB, WWWW, BBWW)
  - Interaction of panel type and candidate race

Hypothesis 2 - Results

Source	Df	F	η^2
Candidate Race	1	1.13	
Panel Type	4	11.73*	.022
Panel Type * Candidate Race	4	4.87*	.009
Error Variance: Candidate within Candidate Race	71	25.06*	.835
Error term	284	(.14)	

Hypothesis 3

- **Mean difference between initial and final ratings will be greater for assessors who are a racial minority on an interview panel than for assessors who are a racial majority on their panel.**

- **Theoretical Basis**
  - **Individuals often adjust their behavior to influence other individuals' perceptions**
  - **Social conformity**

Hypothesis 3

- **Analyses**
  - **Nested effects ANOVA of net reconciliation of overall ratings with the components:**
    - **Candidate race (i.e., Black or White)**
    - **Assessor race (i.e., Black or White)**
    - **Interaction of assessor race and candidate race**
    - **Panel type (e.g., BBBB, BBBW, WWW)**
    - **Interaction of panel type and assessor race**
  - **Net reconciliation: the total reconciliation (change) between initial and final scores**

Hypothesis 3 - Results

Source	_df_	_F_	η^2
Panel Type	4	6.77*	.018
Assessor Race	1	22.70*	.015
Panel Type*Assessor Race	2	.33	
Candidate Race	1	.13	
Assessor Race*Candidate Race	1	.22	
Error term	1439	(.008)	

Hypothesis 4

- **When rating candidates of a different race, mean ratings of candidates will be greater for those assessors who are serving as a racial minority on a panel than for those assessors who are serving on a panel with at least one assessor of the same race as that assessor.**

Hypothesis 4

- **Analyses**
  - **Four nested effects ANOVAs on overall scores (two each for final & initial score)**
    - **Two ANOVAs Component: Number of similar race individuals on the panel.**
    - **Two ANOVAs Component: Panel Composition (i.e., all similar, minority, majority, balanced).**

Hypothesis 4

■ **Follow-up Tests**

- **Mean ratings of candidates of a different race than the assessor are NOT greater for assessors in the minority condition than for those assessors in the balanced, all or majority panel conditions.**

- **Hypothesis 4 was not supported.**

Overall Conclusions

- **Increasing the diversity of rating panels does not necessarily ensure that racial differences will not persist.**

- **Creating the appearance of diverse panels may not, alone, solve the problems of bias in the interview.**

- **The inclusion of a minority assessor may prove beneficial in minimizing racial differences. Balanced panels displayed small racial differences in the current study. However, the smallest racial differences were actually found in the majority White assessor panel.**

Practical Implications

■ **Practical implications**

◆ **The racial composition of an interview panel impacts the evaluation a candidate receives.**

◆ **Findings would tend to suggest that the presence of one minority race member on a panel is enough to minimize racial differences. May not be necessary to create a balanced panel of four assessors if a three-person, panel of assessors of two majority race assessors and a minority race assessor can be recruited.**

Practical Implications

- **Demonstration of same-race bias and rating differences based on the racial composition of the rating panel may lead to rating differences that influence the final candidate score and ultimately impact hiring decisions.**

- **Even if rating bias does not result in real differences in hiring decisions for a given candidate(s), the pattern of bias detected overall, in such a situation may hinder the legal defensibility of a selection system.**