Adverse Impact and Test Validation: A Practitioner’s Handbook: Chapter 4
Developing, Validating, and Analyzing Structured Interviews

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Developing, Validating, and Analyzing Structured Interviews

BCGi: Adverse Impact & Test Validation Book Series: Chapter 4

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A Little About Jim Kuthy

- Holds Masters and Doctorate Degrees in Industrial & Organizational Psychology
- Almost 20 years of training and experience in the employment selection field
- Designed selection interviews for dozens of employers
- Validated many selection devices, including conducting validation studies that have been successfully defended in court or passed review by federal agencies
- Taught Psychology and Business-related courses at the University of Akron in Ohio and Psychological Testing at California State University, Sacramento

What are Structured Interviews and How are they Scored and Analyzed?

- Structured Interviews are oral interview sessions for hiring or promotional selection processes
- They are different than many ad-hoc, informal interviews in both the way they are given and how they are scored
- Structured Interviews can include several types of questions:
  - Situational questions
  - Behavioral questions
  - Competency-based questions
- Structured Interviews typically involve several raters and pre-defined scoring routines

Why is this Topic Important to HR/EEO Professionals?

- Why do I need to know about this topic?
  - Yes... Interviews are “tests” and they are also subject to Title VII validation laws and are frequently litigated
  - Informal, ad-hoc interviews are generally not as effective as validated, structured interviews
  - There is a process for building and developing strong interviews, but many employers don’t take the time
- What are the key essentials I need to know about this topic?
  - Structured interviews are not too difficult to develop
  - Using multiple raters and rating scales can improve the effectiveness and validity of your interview process
- What are the consequences surrounding these issues?
  - Ad-hoc, informal interviews can possibly introduce liability and lower the quality of your workforce
  - The “start up” cost of a validation case is $30k to $80k
Presentation Overview

- Overview & Background
- Methods for Improving the Interview Process
- Types of Questions to Include in Structured Interviews
- Steps for Developing Situational Questions
- Administering and Scoring an Interview

Presentation Overview

- Methods for Improving the Interview Process
  - How valid and reliable the interview is may be highly specific to both the situation and to the rater.
- Types of Questions to Include in Structured Interviews
  - Situational questions
  - Behavioral questions
  - Competency-based questions

Presentation Overview

- Steps for Developing Situational Questions
  - We will cover the steps that are typically involved in the Situational Interview development process
- Administering and Scoring an Interview
  - Selecting raters
  - Training raters
  - Assembling panels
  - Administering/scoring the interview
  - Combining applicant scores from multiple panels

So... Let’s start!
Use Interviews as Part of an Overall Selection Process

• Generally, it is a better to use interviews in combination with other selection tools than to rely on an interview alone
  – You can miss a lot if you use only an interview in an attempt to measure everything
  – Only give as much weight to the interview when making a selection decision as is justified by the job analysis

Sometimes, interviews are not the most appropriate way to measure whether an applicant possesses a skill or ability

In the interview he said he had hundreds of hours on the computer.

What to measure during an interview?

• Measure appropriate, observable behaviors
  – Not traits or characteristics that only appear over time (such as creativity, dependability, and honesty)
  – Not behaviors that would be more appropriately measured using other methods
**What to measure during an interview?**

- Identify what you want to measure based upon a job analysis...
  - Operationally define the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics to be measures in terms of observable behaviors or outcomes
  - Limit yourself to several key areas identified during the job analysis as important and/or critical
  - Do not try to measure too much
  - Try to measure abilities that are performance differentiating, if possible

**Types of Interview Questions**

- **Situational**: “What would you do if...?”
- **Competency-based**: “Explain how you would...”
- **Behavioral**: “What have you done when...?” or “Tell me about a time when you...”
  - Also referred to as “Experience-based questions” – based on the concept that the best predictor of future performance is past performance
  - Experience-based questions are not appropriate for jobs where applicants have not had the opportunity to experience the desired behaviors

**Steps for Developing Situational Questions**

- **Preparation Steps**
  - Conduct a Job Analysis
  - Select the knowledge, skills, abilities, or personal characteristics to be measured using a Selection Plan
  - Prepare “Situational Interview Question” forms, with spaces for Job Experts to indicate Critical Incidents
- Consider convening a workshop to generate draft situational questions
Steps for Developing Situational Questions

Development Steps: Optional Workshop Setting
- Explain process used thus far in the development of the interview (e.g., Job Analysis, Selection Plan), the benefits of using structured interviews
- If you have a sufficient number of Job Experts, break them into teams of at least two members each
  - Assign each team relatively the same number of knowledge, skills, or abilities to focus on

Steps for Developing Situational Questions

Development Steps: Workshop Setting
- Define and review the concept of Critical Incidents
  - Encourage Job Experts to give examples of incidents that have occurred on the job where there was an opportunity for employees to “rise to the occasion” by demonstrating stellar performance, or not, by making less-than-effective choices

Steps for Developing Situational Questions

Development Steps: Workshop Setting
- Prepare the panel for developing situational interview questions
  - Are job related
  - Do not measure knowledge, skills, or abilities learned on the job
  - Provide sufficient content and complexity
  - Are not overly job (employer) specific
  - Are not too easy or too difficult
  - Are culturally and politically sensitive and appropriate
**Steps for Developing Situational Questions**

- **Development Steps: Workshop Setting**
  - Ask Job Experts to independently develop critical incidents related to their assigned knowledge, skill, or ability areas
  - Experts exchange critical incident forms and refine; then select the best
  - Read the best aloud to the group; have the group informally grade each (e.g., A, B, or C)
  - Keep those that were rated A or B

- **Steps for Developing Situational Questions**
  - Convert incidents into situational questions
  - Refine possible examples (anchors) for unacceptable, acceptable, and highly acceptable responses
    - You only need to develop a few for each of three levels to provide a guide to the raters
  - Develop customized follow-up questions for each situational question

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**Example of Rating Criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unacceptable</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improper technique, lack of safety, or procedural error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adequate technique, minor procedural error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Acceptable/Outstanding</td>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent technique, no procedural errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Example of Rating Form

Steps for Developing Situational Questions

- Development Steps: After the Workshop
  - Develop interview package containing questions along with standardized rating forms
  - Validate using “fresh eyes” (if possible)
Validation: Have a Job Expert team evaluate and rate situational questions using the following ratings:

- Is the question clear and understandable?
- Is the question at an appropriate difficulty level?
- Does the question measure a Knowledge, Skill, Ability that is needed on the first day on the job prior to training?
- Is the question job related?
  - Does it represent a situation that has occurred or is likely to occur on the job?
- What Knowledge, Skill, Ability is measured by this question?
- Will applicants be able to provide a sufficient response without possessing job-specific (or employer-specific) knowledge
  - Job specific or employer specific knowledge prior to entry to that job must be justified by the Job Analysis

Administering and Scoring Interviews

Select your Interviewers and/or Raters

- Raters can be supervisors of targeted position, experienced position holders, and/or knowledgeable HR staff members
- If high-level knowledge competency-type questions will be asked, knowledge of raters is essential
  - For example, if you are interviewing nursing candidates about how they might perform technical medical procedures, knowledge of those procedures by raters is important
Panel vs. Single Interviewers

**Panel Interview**
- More expensive (-)
- Typically more reliable, thus more valid (+)
- More information is used when making selection decision (+)
- Allows decisions to be reviewed by others before decision is made and providing feedback (+)

**Single Interviewer**
- Less expensive (+)
- Lower reliability & validity (-)
- Typically does not allow decision to be reviewed by others (-)
- Individual interviewers do not get better without formal feedback (-)

Potentially Increase Fairness and/or the Perception of Fairness with Panel Interviews

- Mixed race/gender panels may help reduce the “similar-to-me”/“different from me” biases that individual interviewers might introduce

Use Formal, Structured Interviews

Ask the same, or similar, questions in the same way... every time

We’re sick of asking the same old questions to each applicant, so we’ve decided to be flexible and creative... What’s your favorite football team?
1. **Reliability is a pre-condition of validity.**
2. **Standardizing interviews increases their reliability.**
3. **Thus, standardizing your interviews will almost always increase their validity.**
4. **Strong evidence of validity helps insure that your interview is job related and consistent with business necessity.**

**Train your Interviewers/Raters**
- Provide structured training to standardize process and minimize inconsistency across raters
- Interview process
  - "Frame of Reference" training – Rating dimensions
  - Rating scales (including how to use anchors when rating)
- Potential rating errors
- Provide examples
- Practice/role-playing
- Provide feedback and then practice again
- Test Raters
- Monitor the interview process as it progresses
- Repeat/update training if sufficient time has passed between the last training session and an interview

*Recommendation: Document your training!*

**Potential Challenges**
Interview Question
Danger Zone!

• Marital Circumstances
• Age
  – Including “code words” for age, such as flexibility or vitality in some contexts
• Disabilities and pregnancy
• Gender & physical appearance
• Citizenship & National Origin
  – Unless citizenship is a BFOQ

Use validation as your guide
--BE CAREFUL OF “SMALL TALK”--

Potential wording of a “sticky question” if you must ask

• NO –
  – “How many sick days off did you take on your last job?”
• YES –
  – Describe your attendance requirements and ask if he or she can meet them.
  – “How many days were you absent last year” or, if you wish to determine potential time-off abuse, “How many Mondays and Fridays were you absent last year?”

• First impressions (studies show early impressions can crystallize in only FOUR minutes!)

• Self-fulfilling prophesies (Be careful what pre-interview information is provided to the interviewer)
**Other Potential Rating Errors**

- Educate raters about:
  - Halo errors
  - Leniency/Harshness errors
  - Primacy and Recency effects
  - Contrast effects – inappropriately comparing one applicant to another, rather than to a “standard”
  - Stereotyping interviewees
  - “Similar to me”/“Different than me” biases

  *Determine the raters have learned these by performing “mock” interviews*

**Additional Hints**

- Combine rating scores mechanically
  - Average or sum them
  - Consensus among raters is good goal, but different raters do not need to absolutely agree… you can average their scores if they do not agree
  - If more than one interview panel is used that rate more than 20 applicants each, and the interviewees were randomly assigned to the panels of interviewers, you should standard score (Z score) each panel before combining scores into a final list

**Standard Z Scores for Multiple Panels of Interviewers**

- Subtract each applicant’s score from the average (mean) score of all applicants rated by the panel they were rated by
- Divide that value by that panel’s standard deviation (of all applicant total scores rated by that panel)
- Then, you can combine scores from each of the different panels into a single list

\[
Z = \frac{x - \mu}{\sigma}
\]
**Take notes during the interview**

*Without notes: Less than half of managers could accurately report on the information produced during a 20 minute interview*


**Additional Hints**

- **Anchor** your rating scales with examples and illustrations
  - Provide enough examples to cover a variety of potential responses, but not too many
  - This helps enhance consistency across interviews and objectivity in judging candidates
- Follow-up questions are okay, as long as all interviewees are treated similarly

**Interviewer Experience**

- Provide your interviewers with feedback once someone is hired
  - Without feedback, experienced interviewers agree with each other to no greater extent than do interviewers with differing experiences
**Possible Enhancements**

- Video- or Audio-tape interviews for later review
  - Potentially save time and money
  - Eliminate discrepant raters
  - Record of interview retained
- If appropriate under the job analysis, ask some interview questions via a telephone or other non-visual medium

**What if an applicant says or does something that is inappropriate or unsafe during an Interview?**

- During interviews where an applicant says or does something that would likely result in discipline if it had occurred on the job or would seriously affect that applicant’s ability to satisfactorily perform the job, you should document this including the specifics (e.g., exact wording of response that was inappropriate).
- If more than one person viewed/heard the inappropriate/unsafe behavior, have all who agree that the action demonstrated by the interviewee was inappropriate or unsafe sign the report.
- Anyone who viewed/heard but disagrees should explain, in writing, why they disagree and sign that report.
What if an applicant says or does something that is inappropriate or unsafe outside of the interview?

- Have a formal process in place (including documentation) for including information obtained outside of the interview setting into the selection process
  - For example, a procedure for integrating into the selection system information about an applicant who makes a racially derogatory remark while talking on the cell phone in the hall while waiting to be interviewed

Is There a Connection Between Interview Type and Success in Court?

- Yes
  - Study involving 84 disparate treatment and 46 disparate impact cases where interviews were litigated
  - 17 interview characteristics were evaluated (e.g., objective, subjective, standardized, etc.).
  - Study resulted in clear findings that revealed the three primary ingredients for successful interview validity defense


The Three Primary Factors for Successful Defense of Interviews in Court are...

- Interview objectivity and job relatedness, such as:
  - Objective and specified criteria
  - Trained interviewers
  - Evidence of validity of interview
- Standardized administration, including:
  - Scoring guidelines
  - Minimal rater discretion
  - Common questions
  - Consistency
- Multiple Interviewers
  - Implies a shared decision making process
  - Rater reliability
Finally…

It is **your** responsibility, not the interview’s developer, to insure that the interview is fair and valid.

- Be proactive...
  - Review the validity report
    - Make sure the job analysis is current
    - Have it reviewed by an expert
  - Monitor the interview process on a regular basis for potential issues
    - Look out for biased raters or other issues
  - Retrain or retire interviewers when appropriate
  - Stay current in your research
- **Listen** during the interview. *Do not talk too much*
- Document everything

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Thank you

Questions or Comments?

Under interests you put “cannibalism.” Can you tell me a little more about that Mr. Smith?

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