

THE EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEW: A REVIEW OF RECENT RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

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The past decade has seen continued interest in the employment interview, with several changes in research emphasis. The present review is a comprehensive examination of interview research conducted since Harris last reviewed this literature. We begin with a review of the traditional areas of interview research: reliability, validity, structured interviews, interviewer differences, equal employment opportunity issues, impression management, and decision-making processes. Next, we review and discuss more recent developments in interview research such as the use of the interview as a means of assessing person–organization (P–O) fit and applicant reactions to the employment interview. Throughout the review, suggested topics for future research are discussed.

There is perhaps no more widely used selection procedure than the employment interview. Despite decades of research questioning the validity of the interview and the reliability of interviewers, most organizations still include some type of interview in their selection process. Recent research has investigated a number of different aspects of the interview in an attempt to elucidate the reasons behind their continued use. In addition, several recent studies have presented new psychometric evidence that provides support for the continued use of the employment interview. Our review of this recent research will bring together a wide variety of studies which, when considered together, may provide a better picture of the employment interview and provide us with avenues for future research.

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CONVENTIONAL WISDOM ON THE INTERVIEW

Until very recently, the interview, as typically conducted, was thought to be plagued by many problems. The following is probably an accurate summary of conventional wisdom regarding the employment interview:

- There is low reliability among interviewers regarding what questions should be asked of applicants and how applicants are evaluated.
- Applicant appearance including facial attractiveness, cosmetics, and attire, biases interviewer evaluations. A recent study of appearance bias in the interview was provided by an experiment finding that moderately obese applicants (especially female applicants) were much less likely to be recommended for employment, even controlling for job qualifications (Pingatore, Dugoni, Tindale, & Spring, 1994).
- Non-verbal cues (eye contact, smiling, etc.) also bias interviewer ratings (Dipboye, 1992).
- Interviewers give more weight to negative information than to positive information. Research suggests it takes more than twice as much positive as negative information to change an interviewer's initial impression of an applicant. As a result, the unstructured interview has been labeled a "search for negative evidence" (Rowe, 1989).
- Primacy effects—where information is obtained prior to the interview or during its early stages—dominate interviewer judgments. Research has shown that on average, interviewers reach final decisions about applicants after only 4 min of a 30-min interview. These first impressions are particularly influential because interviewers engage in hypothesis confirmation strategies that are designed to confirm their initial impressions. Interviewers with positive first impressions of an applicant sell the applicant more on the company, do more recruiting, and tell them more about the company (Dougherty, Turban, & Callender, 1994).
- Similarity effects, where applicants who are similar to the interviewer with respect to race, gender, or other characteristics, receive higher ratings and also bias interviewer judgments.
- Interviewers have poor recall. One study demonstrated this by giving managers an exam based on factual information after watching a 20-min videotaped interview. Some managers got all 20 questions correct but the average manager only got 10 questions right (Carlson, Thayer, Mayfield, & Peterson, 1971).

Due to these factors, the typical, unstructured interview has been argued to be a relatively invalid method of selecting employees. However, the publication of Harris (1989, p. 720) signaled a change in direction and optimism of interview research. Harris noted in his review, "Earlier reviews of this literature were quite negative about the validity of the interview as a selection tool; recent research suggests that the interview

may be much more valid.” Harris also reviewed research in other areas, such as decision-making in the interview and the effects of interviews on applicants. In the next sections, we review interview research since the Harris review.

INTERVIEW RESEARCH SINCE 1989

Since Harris’s (1989) review a decade ago, interview research has provided many new insights into the interview. Table 1 contains a categorization and brief summary of the goals and findings of interview research in the past decade. As shown in the table, the research streams are grouped into four categories: (1) Psychometric properties (reliability and validity) of the interview; (2) Ways of improving the interview, which include structured interviews, recognition of individual differences in interviewer validity, and consideration of equal employment opportunity; (3) Process issues, which concern applicant impression management and interviewer decision-making processes; and (4) two new areas of research—person–organization (P–O) fit and the effects of interviews on applicants. Below, we provide a review of studies on the interview published since the Harris (1989) review. The review is grouped into the topical areas that are depicted in Table 1, which are the ones that have attracted most of the attention of interview researchers since 1989.

Psychometric Properties of the Interview

Reliability. As was noted earlier, it has been argued that reliability of the interview is low, in that interviewers do not agree among themselves in terms of what questions should be asked of applicants and how applicants are evaluated. Furthermore, it has been argued that interviewers base their decisions on different factors, have different hiring standards, and differ in the degree to which their actual selection criteria match their intended criteria (Graves & Karren, 1996). A recent meta-analytic review of 111 studies, however, shows that the reliability of the interview varies widely depending on the situation. Conway, Jako, and Goodman (1995) found that the average reliability of highly structured individual interviews was 0.59, while the reliability of unstructured individual interviews was 0.37. As might be expected, reliability was much higher for panel interviews. Surveys reveal that in practice, unstructured interviews are much more likely to be used than structured and, in this case, the reliability of the average interview is likely to be close to 0.37. Thus, individual interviews are only moderately valid. Structured interviews are considerably more reliable, which of course is one of the goals of structured interviews. That structured and unstructured interviews have such different levels of reliability may explain differences in the validity of structured and unstructured interviews, which will be considered in the “Structured interviews” section.

TABLE 1
 Categorization and Summary of Interview Research in Last Decade

<i>Topical area</i>	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Conclusion (post-1989)</i>
Psychometric Properties Reliability of interviewer ratings	Determine degree to which interviewers agree in their ratings	Reliability depends on situation
Validity of interviewer ratings	Determine degree to which interviewer ratings are valid predictors of job performance	Validity ranges from low to moderately high, depending on whether the interview is structured and which corrections are used
Improving the Interview Structured interviews	Determine whether structured interviews are more valid than unstructured interviews. Test relative validity of different formats of structured interviews, and incremental validity of structured interviews	Structured interviews can be quite valid and are more valid than unstructured. Structured interview scores are related to cognitive ability; controlling for cognitive ability reduces the validity of structured interviews
Individual differences in interviewer validity	Determine degree to which controlling for individual differences in interviewer validity improves validity of interview	Interviewers differ in their ability to predict interviewee job performance, but controlling for individual differences may not improve validity
Equal employment opportunity	Determine the degree to which bias against interviewees exists and can be controlled	Similarity effects appear to operate. It is unclear how these affect validity or can be controlled

<p>Process Issues Impression management</p>	<p>Determine degree to which applicants manage impressions in the interview, and the implications of such behavior</p>	<p>Interviewees self-promote and many ingratiate. These behaviors improve interview performance. It is not clear what the implications of these behaviors are for interview validity</p>
<p>Decision-making processes</p>	<p>Investigate various factors that explain how interviewers make decisions in the interview</p>	<p>Pre-interview impressions have strong effects on post-interview evaluations</p>
<p>New Areas of Research P-O fit</p>	<p>Determine the nature and meaning of P-O fit and how it affects interviewers and interviewees</p>	<p>Construct validity of fit remains unclear but, whatever it measures, it appears to be related to interview outcomes. Perceived congruence and subjective fit appear to be more relevant to interviewers' decisions than actual congruence</p>
<p>Effects of interviews on job candidates</p>	<p>Determine the effect of interviews and interviewers on job acceptance decisions</p>	<p>Interviewer characteristics are weakly related to job choice decisions. Little is known about which aspects of the conduct of the interview affects applicants</p>

TABLE 2
Validity of Structured Interview Controlling for Cognitive Ability

	<i>Without range restriction corrections</i>	<i>With range restriction corrections</i>
Cognitive ability (β)	0.48	0.42
Structured interview (β)	0.12	0.27
Multiple correlation (R)	0.54	0.59

Note: Correlation between cognitive ability scores and structured interview performance was estimated at 0.40 (Huffcutt et al., 1996). Validity of cognitive ability was estimated at 0.53 (Hunter & Hunter, 1984). Validity of structured interview was estimated to be 0.31 (without range restriction correction) and 0.44 (with range restriction correction) (McDaniel et al., 1994).

Validity. Although for 50 years the conventional wisdom was that interviews had low validity, publication of several influential reviews in the last decade has challenged this conclusion. In particular, McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, and Maurer (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of the literature and found that the mean validity of all interviews was 0.26 (without correcting estimates for range restriction—see below). This estimate is higher than what has typically been assumed. This overall estimate does not distinguish between structured and unstructured interviews, which will be discussed below.

Improving the Interview

Structured Interviews. It has been known for some time that structured interviews are more valid than unstructured interviews. The McDaniel et al. (1994) meta-analysis estimated the validity of structured interviews to be 0.31, while the validity of unstructured interviews was 0.23. (We think the actual validity of unstructured interviews may be lower than this, as truly unstructured interviews probably would have no numerical scores; meaning they could not have a validity score attached to them.) Another study (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994) suggested even higher validities for structured interviews (0.57 when highly structured). However, it is difficult to know how to interpret this estimate since it was corrected for range restriction (which is a procedure that is not without controversy; Sackett, Schmitt, Tenopyr, Kehoe, & Zedeck, 1985; Schmidt, Hunter, Pearlman, & Rothstein-Hirsch, 1985). Because corrections for range restriction have such a dramatic effect on estimated validity, and because such corrections have not been used in many meta-analyses in the selection literature, the merits of such corrections need to be researched further. Despite concerns over these corrections, however, results do clearly suggest that scores on structured interviews are non-trivially related to job performance.

In the past few years, researchers have attempted to better understand the conditions under which structured interviews are most valid. For example, several studies have investigated the validity of future-oriented or situational interviews (“What would you do if ... ?”) versus experience-based or behavioral interviews (“What did you do when ... ?”). The

McDaniel et al. (1994) meta-analysis suggested that situational interviews are more valid, while two studies directly comparing the formats suggested that experienced-based interviews are more valid (Campion, Campion, & Hudson, 1994; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1995). The other issue that has dominated recent research on structured interviews is that of incremental validity. One pre-1989 study suggested that structured interviews, while valid, did not contribute incremental validity controlling for cognitive ability tests (Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988). This result caused Campion et al. (1988, p. 36) to label structured interviews, "orally administered cognitive ability test[s]." More recently, several studies have suggested that structured interviews do add incremental validity beyond cognitive ability tests (Campion et al., 1994; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1995). It is clear that cognitive ability is substantially correlated with scores on the structured interview, perhaps at a higher level than the structured interview correlates with job performance (Huffcutt, Roth, & McDaniel, 1996 report a correlation of 0.40 between structured interview and cognitive ability test scores). Table 2 shows the incremental validity of the structured interview controlling for cognitive ability. As the table shows, if estimates are uncorrected for range restriction, the validity of the structured interview appears to be quite small controlling for cognitive ability. We are not necessarily advocating here that organizations abandon use of structured interviews in favor of cognitive ability tests. Rather, we are arguing that more consideration needs to be given to what is being measured in the structured interview, and the implications for incremental validity.

Individual Differences in Interviewer Validity. Research has consistently demonstrated that interviewers differ widely in their ability to accurately forecast job performance. This has caused some researchers to wonder whether we should not focus on the validity of the interview, but rather on the validity of the interviewer. It has even been argued that since interviewers differ in their evaluations and use different parts of the rating scale, aggregation of ratings across interviewers systematically understates the ability of interviewer ratings to predict job performance (Dreher, Ash, & Hancock, 1988). Recently, Pulakos, Schmitt, Whitney, and Smith (1996) completed the most comprehensive investigation of individual differences in interviewer validity to date. Analyzing the decisions of 62 interviewers, who completed an average of 25 structured interviews, Pulakos et al. (1996) showed differences in interviewer validity (correlation between an individual interviewer's ratings and job performance for the interviewees who were hired) ranging from -0.10 to 0.65 . Contrary to Dreher et al.'s (1988) arguments, they found that aggregation across interviewers did not lower the estimated validity of the interview. As Pulakos et al. (1996) note, this difference may have been due to the fact that Dreher et al. studied unstructured interviews while Pulakos et al. studied structured interviews. Thus, there appear to be vast differences in interviewer validity, which suggests the somewhat ironic (though obvious) point that those who do the selecting (interviewers) need to be carefully selected themselves.

What background characteristics lead to individual differences in validity is an obvious question for future research.

Equal Employment Opportunity. Numerous studies have investigated the role of equal employment opportunity (EEO) in the interview. Several studies have investigated, for example, whether black, female, or older interviewees received lower ratings than white, male, or younger interviewees. Despite the research attention, this area has suffered from a number of limitations. First, the results have been mixed, with some studies showing sex or racial differences, and other studies showing no differences. Second, few studies investigated demographic similarity in the interview. The literature on demographic similarity would argue that one cannot understand how an interviewer evaluates, say, a female applicant without knowing the sex of the interviewer. Indeed, several recent studies suggest that demographic similarity effects appear to exist in the interview. Namely, white interviewers tend to give white interviewees higher ratings and black interviewees lower ratings, and black interviewers give black interviewees higher ratings and white interviewees lower ratings (Lin et al., 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres, & Lewis, 1996). These studies also suggested that structured interviews did not counteract these race effects.

The role of gender has been studied frequently, and the most recent results suggest that females do not receive lower ratings than males (Harris, 1989). However, studies investigating sex similarity have been lacking. With respect to the race similarity effects, it is easier to understand why these findings exist (the similarity–attraction paradigm is one of the more robust findings in social psychology) than what should be done about them. The similarity effects would only imply generalized adverse impact if interviewers were demographically imbalanced (e.g., more male interviewers than female). Thus, one practical implication of these findings would be to ensure that interviewers were balanced in terms of demographic characteristics. A recent analysis of discrimination cases involving the interview suggested that the employer loses a little under half of all cases that reach district court (Williamson, Campion, Malos, Roehling, & Campion, 1997). Thus, employers need to be concerned with adverse impact in the interview. The same study showed that structured interviews fared significantly better in the courts.

Process Issues

Impression Management. Unlike other selection procedures, the employment interview has a social component. To be sure, the exchange of information is central to the intended purpose of the interview. Yet it must be acknowledged that most questions asked in the interview, if the collection of factual information were the primary purpose of the interview, could more efficiently be collected from an application blank or questionnaire. It may not be too much of an overstatement to conclude that interviews are a bit of an illusion—the evident purpose is the exchange of factual information, but the social dynamics are what really matter (make the interview distinctive). Given the social

nature of the interview and that applicants typically are motivated to impress the interviewer, the inclination of applicants to manage impressions in the interview cannot be denied.

Indeed, a recent study (Stevens & Kristof, 1995) of applicant influence behavior in the context of college interviews revealed that, during the course of an interview, all applicants self-promoted (used positive self-descriptions), and the average applicant engaged in 33 acts of self-promotion and spent roughly 8 minutes on self-promotion during the course of the 30-minute interview. By contrast, roughly half the applicants engaged in some form of ingratiation (praise, compliments, opinion conformity), but the average applicant engaged in only two acts of ingratiation. How well do these tactics work? Recently, Higgins, Judge, and Ferris (2000) completed a meta-analysis, which revealed that ingratiation and self-promotion positively affected an interviewer's evaluation of job candidates. Thus, applicants engage in impression management behaviors, and it appears that those who engage in more of these behaviors achieve higher success in the interview. It is not known what implications applicant impression management have for the interview. On the one hand, impression management would appear to be a source of error in that it stands in the way of interviewers accurately measuring an applicant's true qualifications for the job. On the other hand, to the extent that impression management behaviors are related to job performance (and it appears that they are; Higgins et al., 2000), impression management may not detract from, or may even enhance, the validity of the interview. This would be a worthy area for future research.

Decision-Making in the Interview. The literature studying how interviewers make decisions in the interview continues to expand. One of the more prominent research streams has concerned the effect of interviewers' pre-interview impressions on their subsequent decisions. In one sense, the effect of pre-interview beliefs on post-interview decisions is perfectly logical and functional—most interviewers have collected certain information about an applicant from other sources (applications, resumes, references, test scores) and this information can be quite relevant. Thus, pre-interview information can actually enhance or augment the validity of the interview. Where the situation becomes problematic is when pre-interview perceptions bias the subsequent conduct of the interview, and interviewers' cognitive processes during or after the interview. To the extent that such biases are pervasive, it would undermine the validity of the interview—if an interviewer's decisions were purely a function of pre-interview beliefs, then the decision would only be as valid as the pre-interview information. In fact, research indicates that pre-interview impressions influence post-interview evaluations and affect interviewers' behaviors (e.g., interviewers with positive pre-interview impressions spend more time recruiting the applicant) and cognitions (interviewers' pre-interview impressions influence how they interpret applicant behavior during the interview) (Phillips & Dipboye, 1989). Research further indicates that pre-interview impressions influence post-interview evaluations, even controlling for appli-

cant qualifications (Cable & Gilovich, 1998). The ubiquity of pre-interview impressions creates a self-fulfilling prophecy—interviewers with positive pre-interview impressions act more favorably toward applicants, gather less information from applicants that might disconfirm their prior impressions, and their positive behavior and greater degree of selling behaviors causes applicants to behave more favorably toward the interviewer—all of which serves to confirm the initial impressions (Dougherty et al., 1994).

Summary. In light of the results from the past decade of research, many have become more optimistic about the continued use of the employment interview. Several studies have offered evidence, which suggests that the validity of the employment interview is greater than previously believed. In addition, when the level of interview structure is considered, we find that it may be possible to greatly improve the validity of the interview by implementing a degree of structure. Finally, while further research is necessary to determine the extent to which factors such as the use of impression management techniques may affect the validity of the interview, recent research has provided reason to be optimistic about the continued use of the employment interview in the selection process. Some nagging concerns in these areas of research were noted, however, and should be addressed in future research.

NEW AREAS OF RESEARCH ON THE INTERVIEW

Despite having learned a great deal about the employment interview in the last 50 years, until very recently, interviewing research continued to examine traditional areas of investigation such as the psychometric properties of the interview, the validity of structured interviews, and EEO concerns. Within the last few years, however, research has emerged in two new areas—the role of P–O fit in the interview and applicant reactions to the interview—that promise to change the face of interview research in the future. This is not to argue that research in the traditional areas should stop—it should not and, of course, will not. Because these new research areas have received little mention in previous reviews of the interview literature, we focus most of the remainder of this article reviewing these new areas, and offering suggestions for future research.

P–O Fit and the Employment Interview

Organizations may benefit from hiring employees based on their fit with the culture and goals of an organization rather than just the requirements of a particular job (Bowen, Ledford, & Nathan, 1991; Chatman, 1991; Govindarajan, 1989). The employment interview represents one important method that organizations can utilize to establish P–O fit because interviews enable organizations and applicants to interact through organizational representatives, allowing each party to determine if the other demonstrates congruent

values. Although interviewers readily claim the importance of “fit” in their hiring decisions (Ricklefs, 1979; Rynes & Gerhart, 1990), and researchers have proposed that a critical function of the employment interview is the assessment of applicants’ values congruence (Bowen et al., 1991; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Ferris, 1991, 1993; Parsons, Cable, & Liden, 1999), few empirical studies have investigated the role of P–O fit in the context of the interview. In fact, P–O fit has been explicitly studied in only four empirical investigations and has not been discussed in any of the nine comprehensive literature reviews of interview research (Harris, 1989). We next review past research on this topic and suggest avenues for future research.

What Is P–O Fit? P–O fit refers to the congruence between an attribute of a person and an attribute of an organization. Past P–O fit research has examined congruence between a large and diverse collection of attributes—individuals’ goals, values, needs, interests, and personalities have been compared with organizations’ cultures, pay systems, size, structure, and values (Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996). Because interview research inherently deals with applicant–interviewer dyads and person-perception, there is a need to distinguish between actual congruence and perceived congruence. *Actual congruence* refers to the similarity between an applicant’s attributes and an organization’s attributes as independently reported by each party (Cable & Judge, 1997). *Perceived congruence*, on the other hand, refers to similarity between an interviewer’s *perceptions* of an applicant’s and their organization’s attributes. Finally, subjective P–O fit perceptions refer to interviewers’ holistic judgments about an applicant’s P–O fit, because interviewers probably respond to applicants based on their perceptions. Thus, *subjective P–O fit evaluations* refer to an interviewer’s interpretation of an applicant’s fit with their organization.

Past Research on P–O Fit and the Interview

Rynes and Gerhart (1990). Rynes and Gerhart investigated interviewers from over 100 organizations and examined interviewers’ ratings of 246 applicants. Interviewers evaluated applicants’ specific traits (e.g., leadership, warmth), overall employability, and firm-specific employability with the interviewers’ organizations (used as a proxy for subjective P–O fit judgments). Results indicated that interviewers discriminated P–O fit from the overall “hirability” of an applicant, and that interviewers’ P–O fit judgments are based on firm characteristics and not just on idiosyncratic interviewer preferences. Finally, Rynes and Gerhart found that interviewers’ subjective P–O fit judgments were related to applicants’ personal characteristics (e.g., interpersonal skills, goal orientation, attractiveness) but not their “objective” qualifications (e.g., grade point average, work experience).

Bretz, Rynes, and Gerhart (1993). Bretz, Rynes, and Gerhart tape-recorded 54 campus interviewers as they talked about what applicant attributes led to a “best fit” or a “worst fit.” Interviewers’ statements were transcribed

and coded, and results revealed that the most frequently mentioned determinants of P-O fit were job-related coursework or experience and generally desirable, "mom-and-apple-pie" interpersonal traits such as articulateness and personal appearance. Interviewers made little mention of applicants' goals and values, which is incongruent with earlier conceptualizations of P-O fit (Chatman, 1989).

Adkins, Russell, and Werbel (1994). Adkins, Russell, and Werbel studied 44 interviewers evaluating 171 applicants across 353 interviews. Using the Comparative Emphasis Scale (CES), the researchers assessed the work values of applicants, interviewers, and organizations (as reported by the interviewers). This data collection strategy represented a substantial extension of the previous two studies because it allowed the researchers to examine the relationship between actual values congruence and subjective P-O fit judgments. Results confirmed the findings of Rynes and Gerhart (1990) that suggested interviewers distinguish between P-O fit and employability. However, results also suggested that actual values congruence was not related to subjective P-O fit judgments or to second interview invitations. Interestingly, results indicated that the congruence between applicants' values and interviewers' *personal* values were related to interviewers' subjective P-O fit judgments, indicating that interviewers' fit perceptions may be idiosyncratic rather than firm-based. Finally, Adkins et al. found that interviewers' P-O fit perceptions were influenced by applicants' fit with a "universal" set of work value rankings, suggesting that interviewers from different firms may use a similar "ideal applicant" template when evaluating P-O fit.

Cable and Judge (1997). Cable and Judge noted the difficulty in comparing results from the above studies because Rynes and Gerhart (1990) examined perceived congruence while Adkins et al. (1994) examined actual congruence. To test a model that included both actual and perceived values congruence, as well as interviewers' subjective P-O fit judgements, Cable and Judge employed the Organizational Culture Profile (OCP) to assess applicants' reports of their own values and interviewers' perceptions of applicants' values. Several months after the interviews, interviewers reported their perceptions of their organizational values. Data from 38 interviewers evaluating 93 applicants indicated a significant but small relationship between actual and perceived values congruence, and indicated that perceived values congruence had a far greater effect on subjective P-O fit perceptions than objective values congruence. Results also suggested that interviewers' subjective P-O fit perceptions are closely related to interviewers' hiring recommendations and organizations' hiring decisions.

Future Research on P-O Fit and the Interview

Fig. 1 is an amalgam of the results from past research and the theoretical models developed by Cable and Judge (1997) and Parsons et al. (1999). We use Fig. 1 to provide a conceptual roadmap for understanding the antecedents and

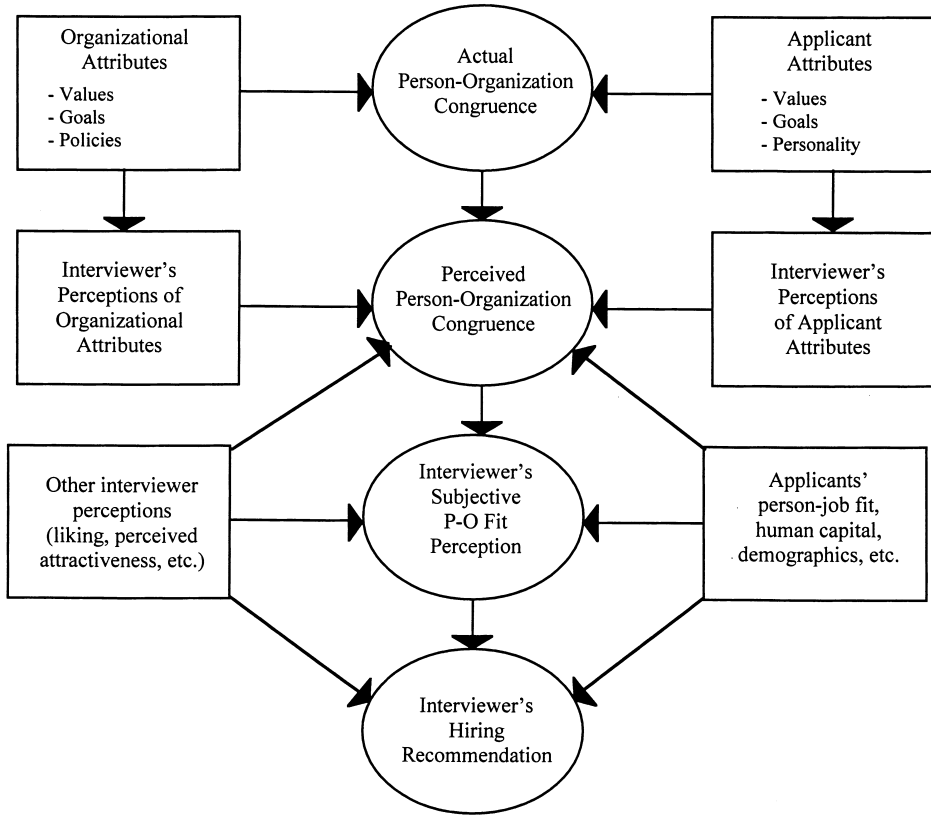


Figure 1. Person–Organization Fit and the Employment Interview.

consequences of P–O fit in the context of the interview, and to highlight unanswered questions and new avenues of research. In general, Fig. 1 depicts the process through which organizational and applicant attributes result in interviewers' P–O fit perceptions and hiring recommendations. Applicant and firm attributes affect interviewers' perceptions of applicant and firm attributes, leading to perceived congruence. In turn, perceived congruence, along with other applicant characteristics and interviewer perceptions, affects interviewers' subjective P–O fit estimates.

The transition from actual to perceived P–O congruence places the onus of perceiving two sets of attributes on the interviewer. Thus, the relationship between actual and perceived P–O congruence depends on how accurately interviewers can assess applicants' attributes and how accurately interviewers perceive their organizations' attributes. Perceived congruence is therefore susceptible to a myriad of perceptual biases, and it perhaps is not surprising that actual congruence appears to play a very small role in the interviewing process. As noted above, Cable and Judge (1997) found a significant but small relationship between actual congruence and perceived congruence, and Adkins

et al. (1994) found no effect between actual congruence and interviewers' subjective fit judgements. As suggested by Cable and Judge (1997), when actual and perceived fit are unaligned, perceived congruence should be more predictive of decisions than actual congruence, consistent with theories of social memory (Wyer & Carlston, 1994). However, to the extent that interviewers' P-O fit perceptions are based on misinterpreted attributes, the function of the interview as a means to assess and establish P-O fit is called into question (Cable & Judge, 1997).

Several important questions remain regarding the relationship between actual and perceived congruence before we can assess the potential role of the interview in helping organizations establish P-O fit. For example, additional research is needed to ascertain what attributes of applicants and organizations interviewers focus on when making P-O fit judgments. There has been a trend in the P-O fit literature to focus on similarity in terms of *values*, defined as enduring beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state is preferable to its opposite (Adkins et al., 1994; Cable & Judge, 1997; Chatman, 1989; Judge & Cable, 1997; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). However, it is not yet clear which values interviewers place the most emphasis on, how many different values interviewers consider, or whether different interviewers from different organizations consider the same values. It also is possible that interviewers base their P-O fit judgements on attributes other than values—for example, interviewers may focus on the congruence between their firms' business goals and applicants' career goals. Finally, as indicated in Fig. 1, additional research is needed to establish the effect of congruence relative to the direct effects of interviewer perceptions (e.g., liking) and applicant attributes (e.g., human capital). For example, Cable and Judge (1997) found that applicants' sex and interviewers' personal liking of applicants were related to perceived values congruence, perhaps helping to explain the small effects of actual values congruence.

Perceptions of Applicant Attributes. Research is needed to ascertain how accurately interviewers judge applicants' attributes (values, personality, etc.), and how interviewers' assessments can be improved. Some research indicates that interviewers are not adept in assessing applicants' personal characteristics (see Arvey & Campion, 1982), but other research indicates that interviewers can assess applicants' values with some modicum of accuracy (Jackson, Peacock, & Holden, 1982; Paunonen, Jackson, & Oberman, 1987). Furthermore, the recent "consensus at zero acquaintance" person-perception literature indicates significant agreement between observers regarding a target person on personality traits and intelligence, as well as agreement between the observers with the target, even when interactions with the target person are minimal (Albright, Kenny, & Malloy, 1988; Bernieri, Zuckerman, Koestner, & Rosenthal, 1991; Borkeau & Liebler, 1992, 1993; Watson, 1989).

Additional research is needed to confirm and extend Cable and Judge's (1997) findings that interviewers can assess applicants' work values with significant (albeit low) validity. For example, research is needed to assess

what cues interviewers attune to when making judgements about applicants' values and personality, and whether different interviewers focus on the same cues. Future research could be advanced through lab studies where observers view standardized videotapes of an interview and evaluate the target's values and personality. It would be particularly interesting to allow observers to continually update their reports as they gather additional cues during the interview. Also, given the prevalence of "panel interviews" where several interviewers meet simultaneously with an applicant (Taylor & Bergmann, 1987), it is important for future research to examine agreement between multiple interviewers from the same organization. Future research should also investigate the degree to which interviewers' personality, values, and P-O fit evaluations are affected by information-processing biases (e.g., stereotyping, contrast effects, snap decision-making) and whether the accuracy of interviewers' perceptions of applicants' values and personalities can be improved by variations on the standard interview format, such as structured or situational interviews (McDaniel et al., 1994). As noted by Cable and Judge (1997), "It may be possible to improve interviewers' P-O fit judgments by structuring interviews around organizational cultures (rather than specific jobs) and by assessing applicants' personal characteristics that are relevant to the 'fit' criterion." Finally, it would be interesting to confirm Parsons, Cable, and Wilkerson's (in press) proposition regarding "functional relevance," whereby interviewers' perceptual accuracy is greater for those applicant attributes that are relevant and salient to the recruiter's organizational culture (Bargh, 1994).

Perceptions of Organizational Attributes. As indicated in Fig. 1, perceived congruence includes not only interviewers' perceptions of applicants' attributes but also his or her organization's attributes. Accordingly, research is needed to ascertain the reliability and validity of interviewers' beliefs about their own organization's attributes (values, goals, etc.) and how their organizational beliefs can be made more consistent and accurate. Rynes and Gerhart (1990) reported that when multiple interviewers from the same firm evaluated applicants' P-O fit, inter-rater reliability was much greater than for interviewers from different organizations (also see Bass, 1951). Thus, there appears to be at least some consistency in interviewers' perceptions of their organizations. However, most interviewers receive little to no formal training (Rynes & Boudreau, 1986), suggesting that each interviewer derives his or her perceptions of organizational attributes from idiosyncratic organizational experiences.

Thus, research is needed to examine the validity of interviewers' perceptions of their organizations' cultures, goals, and policies. One way to assess the validity of interviewers' organizational perceptions is to compare them to the perceptions of organizational executives, because executives have the perspective and experience necessary to report about a company's core values (Anderson, 1987) and because the assumptions and values of top management guide and direct perceptions and interpretations of the organization (Enz, 1988). It also would be interesting and useful for future research to reveal what interviewer attributes (e.g., tenure, age, position type) lead to greater accuracy

regarding organizational attributes. Future research may reveal that training can improve the consistency and accuracy of interviewers' organizational perceptions. For example, Parsons et al. (1999) suggested that organizations may benefit from conducting "image analyses" in order to codify their organizational culture and then using this information to design interviewer training interventions to align interviewers' organizational beliefs.

Subjective P-O Fit Perceptions. Additional research also is needed to establish the antecedents of interviewers' subjective impressions about applicant fit. For example, research may reveal that, consistent with Adkins et al. (1994), interviewers' subjective P-O fit evaluations are based on their own personal attributes (values, personality, goals) rather than firm attributes. As suggested by Ferris and Judge (1991), interviewers may consider themselves to be successful organizational members and may assume that their personal attributes provide an appropriate standard for evaluating P-O fit. It also is possible that interviewers prefer applicants similar to themselves because it allows them to build political coalitions (Gilmore & Ferris, 1989). Thus, following Barber (1998, p. 144) and Stevens (1998), future interview research would benefit from investigating interviewers' attributes, motives, and goals rather than treating interviewers as passive actors or failing to differentiate interviewers from the organization itself. Although Schneider's (1987) ASA framework implies that substantial similarity should exist between an interviewer's values and those of his or her organization, Adkins et al. (1994) found considerable divergence, and additional empirical research is needed in this domain.

Research is also needed to investigate whether interviewers' subjective perceptions of fit actually refer to the same types of applicant attributes across different organizations. Although research and theory indicate that different firms have very different values and goals, Adkins et al. (1994) suggested that interviewers from different firms compared job applicants' values to an "ideal applicant" template that was stable across organizations. Moreover, research conducted by Chatman and Jehn (1994) suggest that different organizations share many of the same basic values, particularly if they are in the same industry.

Finally, it should be noted that the voluminous interview research literature traditionally focused on a set of applicant characteristics (e.g., human capital, person-job fit, demographics), and interviewer perceptions (e.g., perceived attractiveness, interviewer liking) that do *not* include P-O fit. Thus, additional research is needed to establish the role of P-O fit in the interview relevant to these characteristics. As noted above, Bretz et al. (1993) found that interviewers often mentioned work-related experiences and classes as predictors of their subjective fit perceptions, but rarely discussed values and culture. Although Cable and Judge (1997) found that perceived values congruence accounted for a large percentage of the variance in interviewers' subjective P-O fit impressions, and that subjective P-O fit impressions accounted for a large percentage of the variance in hiring recommendations

and actual job offers relative to the “traditional” set of interview predictors, these researchers did not control for person–job fit.

Effects of Interviews on Job Candidates

The bulk of past research regarding the employment interview has treated the interview as a selection tool where interviewers gather and evaluate information about applicants (Cable & Judge, 1997; Harris, 1989; McDaniel et al., 1994). However, given that the interview offers applicants a salient personal interaction with a representative of a recruiting firm, it seems likely that applicants also use the interview as a selection tool, gathering information and making evaluations about recruiting firms. The applicant perspective of the interview is represented by a growing body of research (Aldefer and McCord, 1970; Harris & Fink, 1987; Maurer, Howe, & Lee, 1992; Powell, 1984, 1991; Rynes, 1991; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Rynes & Miller, 1983; Schmitt & Cole, 1976; Turban & Dougherty, 1992) that has been previously reviewed by Barber (1998) and Rynes (1991). Rynes (1991) noted that the size of the relationships between interviewer characteristics and applicants’ reactions appear to decrease as (a) dependent variables get conceptually closer to actual job choice, (b) vacancy characteristics are taken into account, and (c) applicants get further along in the recruitment process. In fact, Rynes (1991, p. 413) summarized her comprehensive review of this literature as follows: “In sum, previous research suggests that recruiters probably do not have a large impact on actual job choices.” Thus, Rynes’ (1991) summary of past research in this area might be interpreted as suggesting that researchers should move beyond this line of investigation.

Barber (1998) took a slightly different perspective in her review of past research on the relationship between the interview and applicant reactions. Using a signaling theory perspective, whereby applicants rely on recruiter and interview characteristics to infer information about the firm and the job, Barber (1998) re-examined the research reviewed by Rynes and also included the research published subsequent to Rynes (1991). Barber (1998, p. 58) summarized her review as follows: “The studies reviewed above indicate that recruiter characteristics (in particular, warmth, competence, and informativeness) are related to overall impressions of the organization and to intentions of pursuing employment with the company.” Thus, Barber’s (1998) review might be interpreted as indicating that this line of inquiry has been reasonably successful and demands additional research.

Given the different interpretations that can be made about the existing research in this area, there appear to be several fruitful research directions to be pursued. First, given that signaling theory suggests that applicants rely on the characteristics of the interview and interviewer to infer information about the organization, future research is needed to understand the types and the accuracy of information that applicants gather from the employment interview. To date, past research in this area has focused on applicants’ affective or evaluative reactions to organizations (e.g., organizational attraction) as a

function of interviewer characteristics without considering the specific types and accuracy of information. Thus, Barber (1998, p. 59) noted that "evidence regarding inferences about job or organizational characteristics is relatively scarce." Similarly, Rynes (1991, pp. 409–410) suggested that "generally speaking, previous dependent variables can be grouped into four areas: (a) overall impressions of recruiters, (b) expectancies of receiving job offers, (c) perceived job or organizational attractiveness, and (d) probabilities of pursuing or accepting offers."

From a signaling theory perspective, applicants' attraction to the organization and willingness to accept a job are not the only appropriate outcomes to examine when studying the effects of the interview, because different applicants might make different inferences about the same interview characteristics. For example, one applicant might perceive an interviewer as warm and compassionate and infer that the organization cares about people and treats employees fairly. A second applicant might perceive the same interviewer as warm and compassionate and infer that the interviewer is performing a "sell job" because the firm has too few applicants and too many job openings. Differences between applicants' interpretations could be due to many different factors, including personality, previous work experience, or pre-interview beliefs about the company (Stevens, 1998). This example demonstrates how signaling theory can serve as an appropriate model but researchers can still fail to find support for this model because they are measuring affective reactions (e.g., organizational attraction) rather than the new beliefs that applicants acquire based on their interactions with interviewers. From a signaling theory perspective, it is surprising that research has not focused on the types and accuracy of information that applicants collect from interviews, because presumably, applicants use this information to derive their idiosyncratic evaluations of organizations.

A P–O fit perspective also raises doubts regarding the appropriateness of only measuring applicants' affective reactions as a result of the interview rather than applicants' organizational beliefs. P–O fit research suggests that applicants often respond differently to the same organizational characteristics based on the fit between organizational characteristics and their personal values, goals, and personality (Cable & Judge, 1994, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Judge & Cable, 1997; Kristof, 1996; Schneider, 1987; Turban & Keon, 1993). For example, two applicants may both emerge from an employment interview believing that an organization expects employees to take risks. One applicant may respond positively to risk while the other dislikes risk-taking. From a P–O fit perspective, we would not expect these applicants to have the same affective or evaluative reactions to the same firm, even though signaling theory was supported and they both gathered the same information from the interview. Because past research in this area has overlooked the new beliefs that applicants form as a result of the interview and has concentrated exclusively on affective reactions, it is difficult to interpret past research findings about the effects of the interview on applicants.

Although signaling theory appears to offer a viable model of how applicants make inferences about organizations based on interview characteristics, it also is important to note that signaling theory is not the only approach to understanding the effects of interviews on job seekers. It is also possible that interviewers purposely and directly communicate information to applicants during the course of an interview, such that applicants' subtle inferences are secondary to the overt recruitment goals of the interviewers and the organizations. Thus, researchers have made the distinction between screening interviews, where the focus is on applicant evaluation, and recruiting interviews, where the focus is on attracting and disseminating information to applicants (Barber, Hollenbeck, Tower, & Phillips, 1994; Rynes, 1989; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). For example, Stevens (1998) found that recruitment-oriented interviewers talked 50 percent more and volunteered twice as much information as screening-oriented interviewers. Unfortunately, most research that has examined job seekers' reactions to the interview has concentrated on interviewer characteristics (e.g., behaviors, demographics, warmth, position, listening skills) but has not examined the degree to which interviewers specifically focused on providing information about the company and the job, and we know of no published research that has examined the accuracy of job seekers' post-interview beliefs relative to what they were told by recruiters during the interview. In addition to knowing how much applicants learned during an interview by assessing their company beliefs immediately following an interview, it would be interesting to reassess their beliefs after several weeks to ascertain information retention.

Finally, more research is needed to understand the relationship between applicants' pre-interview and post-interview beliefs. It is possible that one reason why past research has not found large effects of the interviewer on applicants is that by the time applicants arrive at the interview, their beliefs about the organization are too fixed to be altered by a 30-min interaction. Thus, Stevens (1997, p. 963) noted that "recruiter effects may be small and short-lived because applicants' pre-interview beliefs bias their post-interview perceptions and decision processes." Similarly, Barber (1998, p. 67) suggested that, "if reactions to the interview are strongly influenced by pre-interview beliefs, it is unlikely that the initial interview itself can exert much independent influence on applicant reactions." Thus, future research is needed to understand the sources and accuracy of job seekers' pre-interview beliefs about organizations, and to ascertain whether applicant or interviewer characteristics moderate the effects of pre-interview beliefs. For example, it is possible that interviewers have greater effects on applicants when applicants' beliefs about the organization are not strongly held, when applicants have had little prior exposure to the company, or when applicants have had relatively little former work experience. Likewise, it is possible that an interview has greater effects on applicants when it is longer than typical interviews (e.g., 1 h rather than 30 min), when it is conducted by multiple interviewers, or when it is conducted at the organization (e.g., site visits) rather than a career office. Finally, it would be interesting to investigate the interactions between applicants' pre-existing beliefs and the

information that they hear from interviewers. It is possible that the interview is a good method for strengthening beliefs that applicants already hold, but it is not a vehicle for modifying applicants' beliefs, and that other stimuli occurring earlier in individuals' job search (product advertising, career fairs, recruitment literature, information sessions) have greater effects on applicants' incipient beliefs about organizations.

Conclusion

The numerous reviews of the interview literature are evidence of the volumes of research which have already been conducted on the employment interview. A number of studies have examined the psychometric properties of the employment interview as well as a number of factors that may bias the outcomes associated with interviews. These traditional areas of research have come to fruition in the past 10 years, on the whole suggesting more positive conclusions about the usefulness of the interview. This research has also shed light on the continuing problems with the interview; further work in these areas, such as the incremental and construct validity of structured interviews, is needed. At the same time recent research in these traditional areas has proved quite informative in the last decade, research has also investigated new aspects of the interview. Recent interest in the interview as a means of assessing P-O fit, combined with the number of researchers who have begun to examine applicant reactions to interviews, suggests that we still have much to learn. It is our hope that the present review will provide the impetus necessary to stimulate further examination of the employment interview.

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