


Behavioural Event Interviews: *Ethical Reflections*

Presented by:
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Case 1: Solo mum

- Solo mother – 5 years extramural study to gain B Ed (Primary)
- 2009 – completed practicum at local primary
- 2010 – Asked to teach new entrants for final term on an LAT
- Late 2010 – Applied for permanent role at the school
- Prepared extensively – very nervous, first formal interview
- Behavioural question – unable to think of an answer – blind panic
- Returned to classroom, colleagues supported
- Went to car “bawled my eyes out”

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Case 2: Sociopath

- Frantic call from GM HR of NZ's largest construction company
- In middle of selection process for sector general manager
- 3 Candidates – 1 internal, 2 external
- Job analysis & competency based questions prepared by IO Psych
- First candidate (internal) got maximum scores on every question
- Information available to GM HR regarding candidate behaviour
- *"Closest thing to a sociopath I have ever met"*
- What about the two I don't know – if they get high scores what do I do?



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Jeff Simpson PhD Study

Followed a participant group of 82 commerce graduates

Found 14 per cent of the group showed evidence of narcissistic traits.

"Within six months of employment, they were the lowest-performing group of our study and they overrated [themselves] the most as well."

Those who did well after two to three years had no narcissistic characteristics



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Jeff Simpson PhD Study (Cont'd)

On going back to interview notes ...

Narcissist group: Very strong candidate, mature, confident, professional, lots of potential, friendly, self assured, must hire quickly (has other offers)

Good performers: Nervous, not confident, bit shy, perfectionist, quietly confident, nice, friendly

“Structured competency-based interviews and role-plays lend themselves to narcissistic predilections for starring in their own drama.”

Simpson, J. (2012) **Self-Perception and Performance. Exploratory research into the narcissists' first 20 months within a corporate graduate recruitment programme.** (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand



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Code of Ethics Reflections

2.1.1. Psychologists assess the potential harm and benefits involved in their actions, to predict the likelihood of their occurrence and proceed only if the potential benefits outweigh the potential harms. They endeavour to correct any harmful effects that have occurred because of their activities.

2.1.3. Psychologists who conduct psychological assessments select appropriate procedures and instruments and are able to justify their use and interpretation.

2.4.1. Psychologists recognise the vulnerability of some individuals, groups, or communities and take appropriate action in relation to this.



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Structure is essential – but what kind of structure?

“In the 80-year history of published research on employment interviewing..., few conclusions have been more widely supported than the idea that structuring the interview enhances reliability and validity”

Campion, M.A, Palmer, D.K. & Campion, J.E., (1997) A Review of Structure in the Selection Interview, [*Personnel Psychology*](#). 50



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‘The Gold Standard’

Step 1: Develop questions based on a job analysis.

Step 2: Ask the same questions of each candidate

Step 3: Anchor the rating scales for scoring answers with examples and illustrations

Step 4: Have an interview panel record and rate answers.

Step 5: Consistently administer the process to all candidates

Campion, M.A., Pursell, E.D., & Brown, B.K. (1988), Structured Interviewing: Raising the psychometric properties of the employment interview, [*Personnel Psychology*](#), 41 25-42



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15 Enhancements for Structured Interviews

Questions based on job analysis	Anchored rating scales
Same questions for all candidates	Detailed notes
Limit prompting	Multiple interviews
Better types of questions	Same interviewers
Longer interviews	No discussion between interviews
Control ancillary information	Training
No candidate questions	Statistical prediction
Rate each answer	

Campion, M.A, Palmer, D.K. & Campion, J.E., (1997) A Review of Structure in the Selection Interview, [Personnel Psychology](#). 50



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Impression Management

Assertive tactics - ingratiation, self-promotion
 Defensive tactics - excuses, justifications, apologies
 Applicants search environment for cues and tailor their self presentation to the situation, e.g. cues inherent in the type of question being asked
Behavioural event questions can evoke **self promotion** tactics such as claiming responsibility for successes or enhancing responsibilities
Future situation questions may lead to **ingratiation** by supplying answers likely to appeal to the interviewer

Ellis APJ, West BJ, et al. (2002). "The Use of Impression Management Tactics in Structured Interviews: A Function of Question Type?" [Journal of Applied Psychology](#) 87(6): 1200-1208.



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Weapon of Choice

"A clever psychopath can present such a well-rounded picture of a perfect job candidate that even seasoned interviewers [can be fooled]"

Hare, R. D., (1993). [Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us](#). New York, The Guilford Press.

"Questions are a short course for the subject on how to lie to us"
"We cannot trust information we have to solicit"

Avinoam Sapir (1988) Laboratory for Scientific Interrogation.
Personal Communication.



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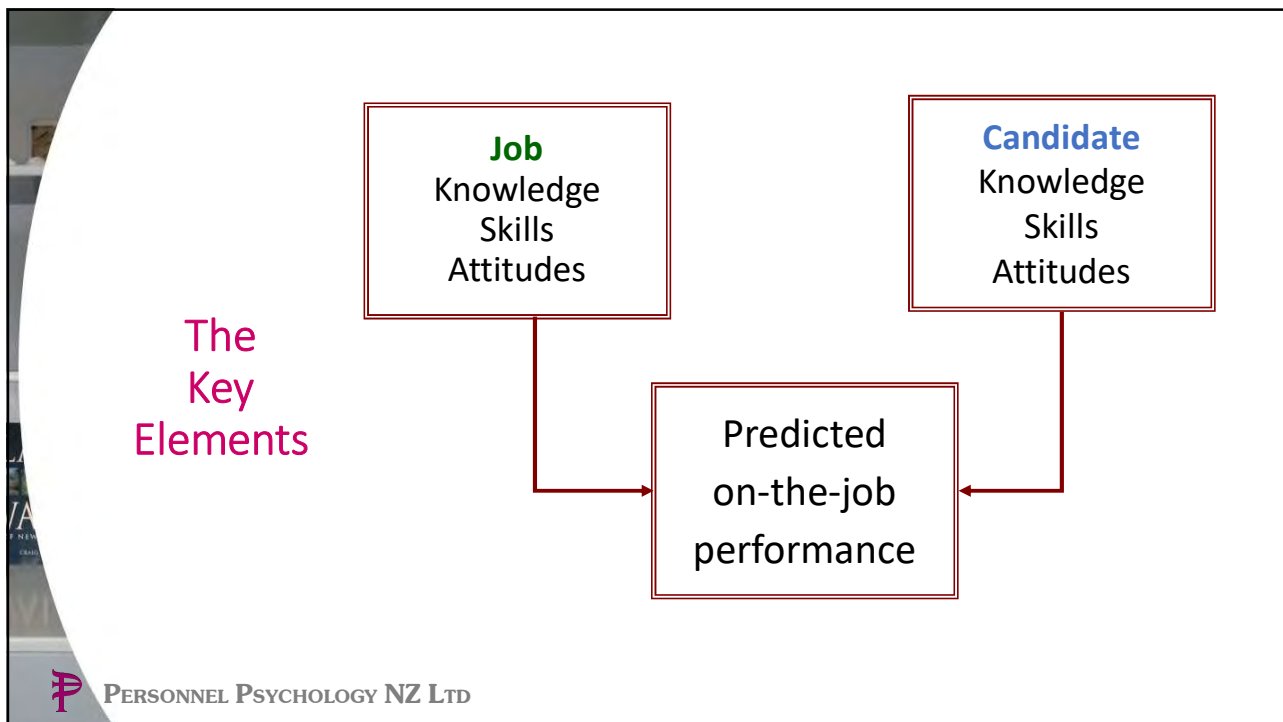
Validity Update

"Although the widely held belief is that structured, rather than unstructured, interviews are superior in validity, our results suggest that unstructured interviews may indeed possess greater validity than previously recognized. In other words, it may be the case that unstructured interviews are as valid as structured interviews"

Oh, I.-S., Postlethwaite, B. E., & Schmidt, F. L. (2013). Rethinking the validity of interviews for employment decision making: Implications of recent developments in meta-analysis (Chapter 12, pp. 297-329). In D. J. Svyantek & K. Mahoney (Eds.), *Received wisdom, kernels of truth, and boundary conditions in organizational studies*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.



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The 'Prediction' Interview

- Gather unbiased sample of behaviour
- Match to known requirements
- Predict how a candidate is most likely to behave on the job
- Use the prediction to guide the selection decision
- *Respects the dignity and self-respect of the candidate*

A cartoon illustration of a man with a large nose and a worried expression, looking into a crystal ball. The crystal ball has a question mark on it, symbolizing the uncertainty and prediction involved in the interview process.

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The 'Pure' Interview

We do not need to know what the job is in order to do the interview.

A structured behaviour sampling interview produces two key pieces of information:

- what motivates and de-motivates the candidate
- what competencies they have

This information lets us predict how the candidate will behave in any given job.



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Reinforcing and Aversive Stimuli

We have two 'poles'

Things we move
TOWARDS



DETAIL?
PEOPLE?
CONFLICT?
STATUS?

Things we move
AWAY FROM



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Structured Behaviour Sampling Framework



SCHOOL



JOB 1
Skills



JOB 2
Skills

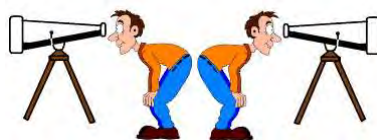


JOB X
Skills



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Does the Past predict the Future?



- Past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour
- But – what reliable access do we have to past behaviour?
- We only have access to current verbal behaviour
- Body language is unreliable (Blind interviewers have the advantage)
- *Described* (what they talk about) versus *Demonstrated* (how they talk about it)



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What behaviours were demonstrated?

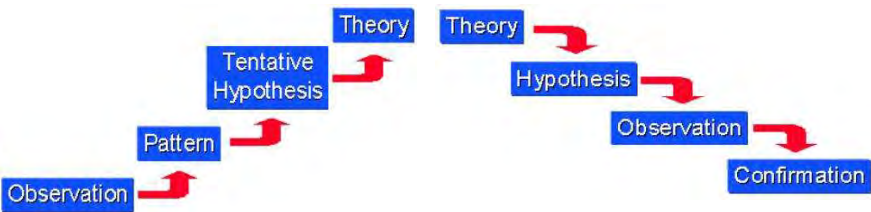
“David, can you please give us an example of a situation where you had to deal with an angry customer, explain what you did and what outcome resulted.”

“That’s easy. When I was working as a salesperson at Gifts-For-All a customer came in with this ridiculous complaint. I mean it is amazing what some people expect. Anyway, I calmed her down and apologised for what had happened. I told her it was a manufacturing error, it wasn’t really but that always sounds good. I replaced her purchase and gave her a discount voucher and she was really happy. I thought it was a good outcome and my boss said I had shown excellent customer service skills.”



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Inductive and Deductive Questioning



INDUCTIVE

- Attitudes and Values
- Naturalistic
- Candidate friendly
- Deception resistant

DEDUCTIVE

- Competencies and Skills
- Formal
- Candidate challenging
- More open to deception



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About PPNZ

Personnel Psychology NZ Ltd provides a comprehensive range of industrial and business psychology services:

- Specialist training (e.g. *'The Psychology of Management'*, *'Enhanced Interview Skills'* and *'Managing Organisational Change'*)
- In-depth executive and staff appointment assessments
- Building effective teams
- Mentoring, coaching and supervision
- Organisational climate surveys and stress audits
- Psychometric test development (e.g. *Selector Professional & Insight*)

The director, Keith McGregor, is a chartered industrial psychologist based in Lower Hutt, New Zealand. His background includes twelve years as a psychologist in the Royal New Zealand Air Force and thirty in private practice working with a wide range of private and public sector organisations in New Zealand and Australia.



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