

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERVIEWERS' AND APPLICANTS' RECIPROCAL EVALUATIONS

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Summary.—The relationship between and among interviewers' evaluations of applicants and applicants' evaluations of interviewers in a college placement center was examined. 62 applicants being interviewed by 11 different recruiters from various industrial and academic agencies participated. Interviewers and applicants evaluated each other on three analogous dimensions: over-all general impression of the applicant (interviewer), personal liking of the applicant (interviewer), and chances that the applicant will receive further consideration by the organization (chances that the applicant would accept a job if offered). Intercorrelations between the interviewers' and the applicants' evaluations ranged from .12 to .42. Further, the interrelationships among the evaluations differed between the interviewers and the applicants. The evaluations of chances of further consideration (or offer acceptance) were more highly related to the other more interpersonal evaluations for the interviewers than for the applicants.

In a recent review of work on the employment interview, Schmitt (1976) pointed out the general lack of research on the impact of the interview on the interviewee. At that time, Alderfer and McCord (1970) had conducted the only study examining the effect of various interview factors on the applicant's decision to accept a job. Among other things, they found that applicants expressed higher probabilities of accepting a job offer when the interviewer was seen as showing an interest and concern for them. More recently, Schmitt and Coyle (1976) investigated the relationship between applicants' reactions to interviewers and subsequent decisions. Again, the interviewer's personality and interpersonal capability were related to the applicant's reported likelihood of job acceptance.

If applicants' decisions are indeed influenced by impressions about the interviewer and perceptions of reciprocal liking, an interesting practical question concerns the direction and magnitude of the relationship between interviewers' assessments of applicants and applicants' assessments of interviewers. The social psychological literature on "implied evaluation" (Insko & Schopler, 1972) suggests that "Information that o likes p will produce a tendency for p to like o" (p. 272). The purpose of the present field study is to examine

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the relationship between interviewers' assessments of applicants and applicants' assessments of interviewers in a college placement center.

METHOD

The subjects participating in this study were 11 recruiters interviewing a total of 62 applicants in the placement center of a large midwestern university. The interviewers represented a variety of industrial and academic organizations, with six recruiting for industrial positions and five recruiting for academic positions. Each interviewer met with from 3 to 9 applicants, with a mean of 5.6. All the interviewers were male and their mean age was 40.0 yr. Forty-one of the applicants were male and 21 were female. The mean ages of the males and females were 23.6 and 22.9 yr., respectively.

Interviewers were asked to make three evaluations of each applicant at the end of each 20- to 30-min. interview. These evaluations were: (1) What was your *over-all general impression* of this applicant as a person? (2) How much did you *personally like* this applicant? and (3) What are the chances that this applicant will be given *further consideration* by your organization? Evaluations were made on 9-point rating scales with appropriate anchors suggested by Bass, Cascio, and O'Conner (1974).

The applicants' assessments of the interviewers were obtained via questionnaires mailed to their homes within three days after their interviews. Each applicant was asked to evaluate each interviewer on three dimensions analogous to those asked of the interviewers. The first two questions were simply reworded and asked for evaluations of over-all general impression and personal liking of the interviewer. The third question was reworded to read "If the organization represented by this interviewer offered you a position, what are the *chances that you would accept?*"

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows all intercorrelations among and between interviewers' and applicants' evaluations. Considering first the correlations between the interviewers' evaluations of the applicants and the applicants' evaluations of the interviewers (B), it can be seen that all the correlations are positive. Except for the three correlations involving Applicants' Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered, all other intercorrelations range from .31 to .42 ($p < .01$ to $p < .001$). Of the three correlations concerned with the Applicants' Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered, only one is significant. Applicants' Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered correlates .23 ($p < .05$) with Interviewers' Evaluations of Applicants' Chances for Further Consideration.

Also of interest are the intercorrelations within the interviewers' evaluations and the intercorrelations within the applicants' evaluations (A and C in Table 1, respectively). Notice that all the intercorrelations are positive and

TABLE 1
 INTERCORRELATIONS AMONG INTERVIEWERS' EVALUATIONS OF APPLICANTS
 AND APPLICANTS' EVALUATIONS OF INTERVIEWERS

Measure	2	3	4	5	6
Interviewers'					
	A			B	
1. General Impression	.86‡	.79‡	.31†	.35†	.21
2. Personal Liking		.80‡	.31†	.41‡	.12
3. Evaluations of Chances			.33†	.42‡	.23*
Applicants'					
				C	
4. General Impression				.89‡	.59‡
5. Personal Liking					.61‡
6. Chances of Accepting					

Note.—*n* = 62. All one-tailed tests. **p* < .05. †*p* < .01. ‡*p* < .001.

large in magnitude. When the average intercorrelations are determined (via Fisher's *z* transformation), the average intercorrelation among the interviewers' evaluations (A) is .820 and the average intercorrelation among the applicants' evaluations (C) is .735. This difference seems to be based on the fact that the decisional type evaluations, i.e., Chances for Further Consideration and Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered, relate more highly to the other more interpersonal evaluations, i.e., Over-all General Impression and Personal Liking, for the interviewers than for the applicants. The average correlation between the Chances for Further Consideration and the interviewers' other two more interpersonal evaluations of the applicants is .790. While the average correlation between the Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered and the applicants' other two more interpersonal evaluations of the interviewers is .600. These two correlations are significantly different ($z = 2.06, p < .05$, two-tailed test) when the test for difference between independent correlations is applied (Cohen & Cohen, 1975).

A likely explanation for the lower average correlation involving the Applicants' Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered is restriction in range of scores on this variable. Given the relatively high unemployment rate and difficulty of securing a job during the period of time when these data were collected, this may appear to be a good explanation at first glance. Examination of the standard deviations indicates that this is not the case. The standard deviation of Applicants' Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered is greater ($SD = 2.28$) than the standard deviation of the Interviewers' Evaluation of Applicants' Chances for Further Consideration ($SD = 1.98$). This suggests that the interviewers' General Impression and Personal Liking of applicants are more highly related to their evaluations of the Applicants' Chances for Further Consideration than are the applicants' General Impression and Personal Liking of interviewers related to their Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered.

A probable explanation for the positive relationships found between interviewers' evaluations of applicants and applicants' evaluations of interviewers would refer to implied evaluation. If individuals emit affective cues during a recruiting interview, it is conceivable that these could influence reciprocal evaluations. Although this study is correlational, there is sufficient experimental evidence (Backman & Secord, 1959) that implied positive evaluation does indeed produce reciprocal positive evaluation. Berscheid and Walster (1969) have pointed out that the most popular advice on how to win affection from others is based on the assumption that implied positive evaluation always produces reciprocal liking. Although not explored in the present study, another possible explanation for the results might refer to perceived similarities between the interviewers and applicants leading to mutually positive evaluations (Rand & Wexley, 1975).

Theoretical explanations for the finding that the Applicants' Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered show the lowest correlations with the interviewers' evaluations are more difficult. A partial explanation may relate to the finding that the Applicants' Chances of Accepting a Job if Offered are less highly related to applicants' other more interpersonal evaluations, i.e., General Impression and Personal Liking, than the Interviewers' Evaluations of the Applicants' Chances for Further Consideration are related to their other evaluations. Given the "clinical" nature of many informal recruiting interviews, it is not surprising that an interviewer's more global and personal evaluations of applicants would influence potential job offers. Further, for the applicant to know the interviewer is a small portion of the decision-relevant information. An applicant's willingness to accept a job offer would probably be influenced much more heavily by other factors, such as job duties, organizational location, nature of offer, etc., than implied evaluations or liking the recruiter.

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Accepted December 17, 1980.