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The Relationship of Selected Communication Variables to Selection Interview Outcome

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1976

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELECTED COMMUNICATION
VARIABLES TO SELECTION INTERVIEW OUTCOME

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of Speech and Theatre
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

Marvin N. Posey, Jr.

July 1976

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELECTED COMMUNICATION
VARIABLES TO SELECTION INTERVIEW OUTCOME

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SELECTED COMMUNICATION
VARIABLES TO SELECTION INTERVIEW OUTCOME

Marvin N. Posey, Jr. July 1976 36 pages

Directed by: J. Regis O'Connor, C. Dodd, and R. Capps

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The relationship of attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length to selection interview outcome was investigated by directly observing fifty-four selection interviews. Statistical analysis of the data revealed that although attitude change was the only independent variable significantly related to interview outcome, all three independent variables interacted in such a manner that applicant acceptance or rejection was correctly predicted 83 percent of the time. Attitude change was concluded to be the product of interview content. Furthermore, the predictive power of variable interaction was interpreted as meaning that given attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length, applicant acceptance or rejection may be predicted a significant portion of the time.

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The dyadic encounter is the foundation of human communication and epitomizes the opportunity for studying speech communication principles and techniques.¹ Dyadic communication is the simplest communicative act whereby information is transmitted verbally and/or nonverbally from a source to a receiver. Therefore, knowledge of the dyadic encounter is fundamental to exploring and understanding the communication process.

The interview is the most frequent type of dyadic encounter.² Surprisingly, however, communicologists have devoted little attention to this indigenous aspect of dyadic communication. In explanation, Lahiff reported:

Until recently the interview, the face-to face exchange of information between two or more persons, had been neglected. It had been assumed that anyone who can carry on a conversation has the ability to conduct an interview and for that reason much more attention had been devoted to training individuals in public speaking and conference techniques, two formats whose importance is magnified by

¹Cecil Stackpole and Robert Widery, "Interviewing as Taught in American College and University Speech Departments," The Speech Teacher 20 (September 1971): 185.

²Ibid.

the visibility of the participants. Since most interviews are held in private with no audience in attendance, scant attention has been accorded it.³

Interviews are generally differentiated into two categories, informal and formal. Informal interviews comprise nonprofessional inquiries, surveys, and routing information-seeking conversations. Formal interviews, on the other hand, are usually business oriented consultations conducted by professional interviewers, personnel managers, or supervisors. While informal interviews are common daily occurrences, their irregular nature makes research extremely difficult. Formal interviews, however, are generally planned and conveniently available for extensive study. The present study focused upon a type of formal interview called the selection interview. The primary objectives of the selection interview are to (1) determine the applicant's suitability for employment, (2) present an accurate job picture to the applicant, and (3) maintain good will for the company.⁴

The selection interview has captured the interest of numerous investigators, mostly industrial psychologists. Their purpose was largely to determine the validity of the selection interview in a particular situation.⁵ Consistently

³James M. Lahiff, "Interviewing for Results," in Readings in Interpersonal and Organizational Communication, 2nd ed. Edited by Richard C. Huseman, Cal M. Logue, and Dwight L. Freshley. (Boston: Halbrook Press, Inc., 1973), p. 332.

⁴Ibid., p. 338.

⁵Eugene C. Mayfield, "The Selection Interview - A Re-evaluation of Published Research," Personnel Psychology 17 (December 1964): 241.

poor results, however, prompted the argument that a better understanding of the factors that affect interviewer decisions is a prerequisite for improving interview validity.⁶ Consequently, Hawes not only opened the door for but also summoned the aid of communicologists in the area when he stated that "A better understanding of the interview as a communication process may lead also to better usefulness of the interview as a predictive instrument."⁷

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between certain variables and the interviewer's final decision. Specifically, this study will focus on attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length, as these factors affect selection interview outcome.

Review of Related Research

In discussing interviewer - interviewee perception, Downs noted several factors salient to selection interview outcome: (1) the nature of the decision, (2) decision criteria, (3) interviewer confidence, (4) decision time, and (5) the effect of bias on the decision.⁸ Specifically, seventy-six professional college recruiters and 152 job applicants were surveyed, and the content of thirty-one tape recorded selection interviews was analyzed in this

⁶E. C. Webster, "Decision Making in the Employment Interview," Personnel Administration 22 (May-June 1959): 16.

⁷Leonard C. Hawes, "The Effects of Interviewer Style on Patterns of Dyadic Communication," Speech Monographs 39 (June 1972): 114.

⁸Calvin W. Downs, "Perceptions of the Selection Interview," Personnel Administration 32 (May-June 1969): 8-23.

investigation of decision making and communication aspects of the selection interview. The results revealed that: (1) the majority of respondents agreed the objective of the selection interview was to determine the personal qualities of the interviewee, (2) interviewee enthusiasm and motivation were salient to interview outcome, (3) the mean level of interviewer confidence in their final decisions was 81 percent, (4) an average of seventeen minutes was required to make final decisions, and (5) interviewer bias was recognized as an obstacle to good interviewing.

Several studies have investigated the effects of written information and personal appearance on selection interview outcome. Carlson found that interviewers were influenced more by written information than personal appearance.⁹ Written information accounted for approximately 40 percent of the variance in the mean rating of applicants, compared to 5 percent for personal appearance. In two experiments involving forty-eight industrial job applicants and three Canadian Army Training Corps candidates, respectively, Springbett found that applicants were more likely to be accepted when their application form was rated before their appearance, although both were rated favorably.¹⁰

⁹Robert E. Carlson, "Selection Interview Decisions: The Relative Influence of Appearance and Factual Written Information on an Interviewer's Final Rating," Journal of Applied Psychology 51 (December 1967): 461-468.

¹⁰B. M. Springbett, "Factors Affecting the Final Decision in the Employment Interview," Canadian Journal of Psychology 12 (March 1958): 13-22.

However, unfavorable application form content or personal appearance was cause for rejection in a significant number of cases.

Another researcher interest concerns the effects of favorable and unfavorable interview information on interviewer decisions. Carlson found that interviewer decisions were influenced more by unfavorable than by favorable information.¹¹ Likewise, in a study where sixteen military personnel officers rated twelve protocols of interview information, Bolster and Springbett found that unfavorable protocols had a significantly greater impact than favorable protocols on officer evaluations.¹² Similar findings were reported by Miller and Rowe in a study involving 32 Ss' assessments of prospective roommates.¹³

Other researchers have explored the relationship of interview length and participant speaking times to selection interview outcome. Huguenard, Sager, and Ferguson found that varying the length of 377 simulated selection interviews, ten, twenty, or thirty minutes did not significantly affect

¹¹Robert E. Carlson, "Effect of Interview Information in Altering Valid Impressions," Journal of Applied Psychology 55 (February 1971): 66-72.

¹²B. I. Bolster and B. M. Springbett, "The Reaction of Interviewers to Favorable and Unfavorable Information," Journal of Applied Psychology 45 (April 1961): 97-103.

¹³J. W. Miller and Patricia M. Rowe, "Influence of Favorable and Unfavorable Information Upon Assessment Decisions," Journal of Applied Psychology 51 (October 1967): 432-435.

interview outcome.¹⁴ However, after analyzing 115 recorded selection interviews, Anderson found that interviewer speaking time was significantly greater and vacant time significantly less when applicants were accepted rather than rejected.¹⁵

In an investigation of life insurance managers' hiring practices, Carlson found a significant relationship between interviewer experience and recruiting procedures.¹⁶ Inexperienced interviewers were reported to offer fewer employment contracts than experienced interviewers, as a result of having surpassed assigned recruitment quotas. However, both categories of interviewers offered more employment contracts when scheduled recruitment quotas had not been met. In a supplemental study, Carlson found that the mode of applicant presentation significantly affected the consistency of interviewer ratings.¹⁷ Sample applicant groups were evaluated more consistently than individual applicants.

¹⁴Timothy Huguenard, Eric B. Sager, and Leonard W. Ferguson, "Interview Time, Interview Set, and Interview Outcome," Perceptual and Motor Skills 31 (December 1970): 831-836.

¹⁵C. W. Anderson, "The Relation Between Speaking Times and Decision in the Employment Interview," Journal of Applied Psychology 44 (August 1960): 267-268.

¹⁶Robert E. Carlson, "Selection Interview Decisions: The Effect of Interviewer Experience, Relative Quota Situation, and Applicant Sample on Interviewer Decision," Personnel Psychology 20 (Autumn 1967): 259-280.

¹⁷Robert E. Carlson, "Selection Interview Decisions: Effect of Mode of Applicant Presentation on Some Outcome Measures," Personnel Psychology 21 (Summer 1968): 193-207.

Additional factors that may affect selection interview outcome surfaced in several selected dyadic communication studies. Exline, Gray, and Schutte, found that eye contact was greater when interviewees listened rather than spoke to interviewers.¹⁸ Furthermore, females exhibited more eye contact with interviewers than males. However, eye contact was less for both sexes when they were asked extremely personal questions. In a similar study, Exline et al found that eye contact decreased when Ss were implicated to the commission of an unethical act, but was greater between like-sex pairs.¹⁹ The latter substantiated Exline's previous findings.²⁰

Argle and Dean conducted two experiments investigating proximity and eye contact.²¹ In the first experiment, twelve Ss were asked to stand before (1) a book, (2) a plaster bust, (3) a life-sized photograph of a human face, (4) a life-sized photograph of an individual seated in a chair with his eyes closed, and (5) a similar photograph of the same individual with his eyes open. Eye to eye distances were measured with

¹⁸Ralph V. Exline, David Gray, and Dorothy Schutte, "Visual Behavior in a Dyad as Affected by Interview Content and Sex of Respondent," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 1 (March 1965): 201-209.

¹⁹Ralph V. Exline et al., "Visual Interaction in Relation to Machiavellianism and an Unethical Act," American Psychologist 16 (July 1961): 396.

²⁰Ralph V. Exline, "Explorations in the Process of Person Perception: Visual Interaction in Relation to Competition, Sex, and Need for Affiliation," Journal of Personality 31 (March 1963): 1-20.

²¹Michael Argyle and Janet Dean, "Eye Contact, Distance and Affiliation," Sociometry 28 (September 1965): 289-304.

a ruler in each instance. The findings revealed that the Ss stood significantly further from the bust and the eyes open photograph than the face and eyes closed photograph.

In the second experiment, twenty-four Ss, half of each sex, were observed during three three-minute conversations with two male and female confederates of the experimenters. The Ss and confederates were seated behind a table at a 90° angle to each other, and the confederates gazed at the Ss continuously during the conversations. Physical proximity was arranged at two, six, and ten feet for each respective discussion session. Eye contact time and length of glances were recorded with stop watches. The findings showed that eye contact time and length of glances increased significantly with greater proximity and were significantly greater between like-sex pairs than opposite-sex pairs at all distances.

While the preceding studies examined eye contact in dyads, several other studies have investigated the effect of cognitive similarity on dyadic communication. In a study involving twenty dyads, Triandis found that "attitude" and "communication" similarities had a marked effect on the proficiency of Ss to communicate the mutual possession of an identical photograph.²² Likewise, Brewer found that dyad members who had a highly positive attraction for one another shared similar attitudes about capital punishment more often than dyad members who had a low positive attraction for each

²²Harry C. Triandis, "Cognitive Similarity and Communication in a Dyad," Human Relations 13 (May 1960): 175-183.

other.²³ Brewer also found a significant relationship between attraction and judged attitudinal similarity, as did Brewer and Brewer.²⁴

On the basis of the present review of experimental findings, the following is concluded: (1) interviewers and interviewees have similar perceptions of the decision making and communication aspects of the selection interview, (2) written information has a significantly greater impact on selection interview outcome than personal appearance, (3) interviewers are influenced more by unfavorable than by favorable interview information, (4) interview length does not significantly affect selection interview outcome, (5) participant speaking times are significantly related to selection interview outcome, (6) interviewer experience is significantly related to selection interview outcome, (7) the mode of applicant presentation has a marked effect on the consistency of interviewer ratings, (8) numerous factors, such as sex, proximity, and role, significantly affect eye contact in dyadic situations, and (9) cognitive similarity has a significant effect on dyadic communication.

Although previous studies have observed the cause-effect relationship of specific variables to selection

²³Robert E. Brewer, "Attitude Change, Interpersonal Attraction, and Communication in a Dyadic Situation," Journal of Social Psychology 75 (June 1968): 127-134.

²⁴Robert E. Brewer and Marilyn B. Brewer, "Attraction and Accuracy of Perception in Dyads," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 8 (February 1968): 188-193.

interview outcome, direct field observation has seldom been utilized in these investigations. Furthermore, the possibility that eye contact may cause some job applicants to be accepted and others rejected has not been explored. Therefore, the direct field observation of selection interviews and the nonverbal dimension of eye contact in relation to interviewer evaluations is unique to this study.

Attitude change is a communication process. Zimbardo and Ebbesen agreed that attitudes are "mental readi-nesses or implicit predispositions which exert some general and consistent influence on a fairly large class of evaluative responses."²⁵ Furthermore, they reasoned that attitudes are susceptible to change because

. . . man is a rational information processing organism who can be motivated to attend to a communication, to learn its contents, and to incorporate them into his verbal repertoire of responses when this learning is rewarded. Thus the instrument of change is a formal, structured communication. The agent of change is either the actual or anticipated reward for agreeing with the communicator, or else the awareness of the logical and rational necessity for accepting the information and position advanced.²⁶

Therefore, selection interview outcome may possibly be affected by interviewer attitude change stemming from applicant responses.

Likewise, the amount of eye contact in a communication situation produces numerous evaluative responses. Beebe

²⁵Philip Zimbardo and Ebbe B. Ebbesen, Influencing Attitudes and Behavior (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1970), p. 6.

²⁶Ibid., p. 16.

found that the amount of eye contact generated by a public speaker significantly enhanced listener perceptions of the speaker's credibility.²⁷ In addition, Ellsworth and Carlsmith found that frequent eye contact coupled with positive verbal content produced positive communicator evaluations, while frequent eye contact and negative verbal content produced negative communicator evaluations.²⁸ Therefore, the amount of eye contact that occurs between the interviewer and the job applicant during the selection interview may influence interview outcome.

Time is another persuasive communication variable. Hall stated that time speaks more plainly than words and because it is manipulated less consciously than spoken language, it shouts the truth where words lie.²⁹ Therefore, interview length may indicate selection interview outcome if favorable applicants are interviewed for longer periods of time than unfavorable applicants.

Attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length are communication variables common to the selection interview.

²⁷Steven A. Beebe, "Eye Contact: A Nonverbal Determinant of Speaker Credibility," The Speech Teacher 23 (December 1974): 21-25.

²⁸Phoebe C. Ellsworth and J. Merrill Carlsmith, "Effects of Eye Contact and Verbal Content on Affective Response to a Dyadic Interaction." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 10 (June 1968): 15-20.

²⁹Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Greenwich, Connecticut: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1959), p. 15.

However, the relationship of these variables to selection interview outcome has yet to be explored from a communication viewpoint. Therefore, the question which the present study attempted to answer was what is the relationship of attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length to selection interview outcome?

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted at a local plant of FMC Corporation's Crane and Excavator Division. This plant was relatively new and in the process of interviewing and employing numerous experienced welders, machinists, and warehousing specialists selected from over 8,000 applicants. Selection interviews were the responsibility of the plant's interviewer-recruiter who had the authority to accept or reject applicants. Although accepted applicants were subject to further approval by first-line supervisors and the director of personnel relations, the interviewer-recruiter's initial evaluation of applicants constituted a final decision for the purpose of this investigation.

Fifty-four selection interviews were directly observed in the interviewer-recruiter's office. A diagram of the research setting is shown in Figure 1. Two partitions, each approximately five feet high, bordered the office. These partitions provided adequate privacy from visual distractions, but did not mask outside noise such as ringing telephones, typewriters, and employee conversations that frequently interrupted the interviews. These interruptions were carefully timed and factored out by the operational measure

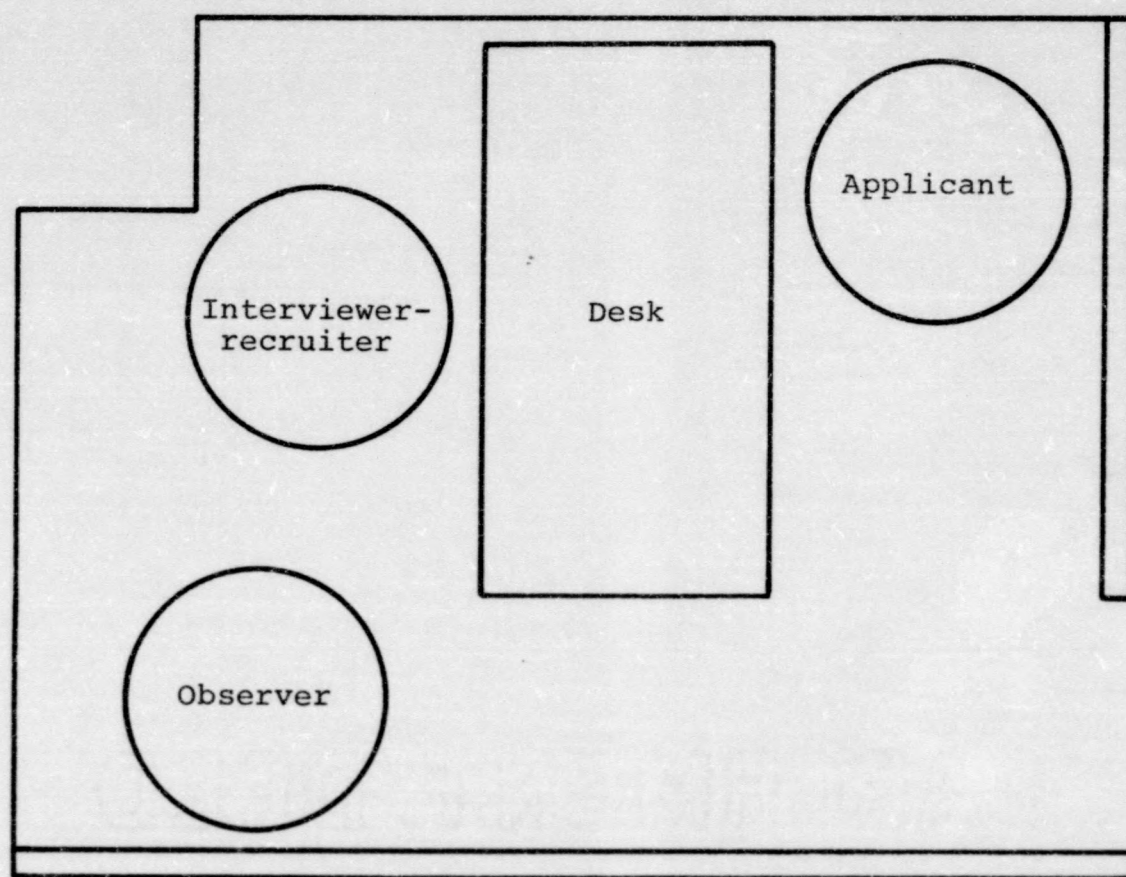


FIGURE 1
Research Setting

of interview length. The interviewer-recruiter was not informed, however, that interview length and eye contact time were being measured, and there was no indication that he was ever aware these variables were under investigation.

Measurement of Variables

This section reports the measurement of the independent and the dependent variables. Appendices A and B contain the independent and dependent instruments used in recording data.

Independent Variables

Attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length comprise the three independent variables in this study. Each operational definition is indicated.

Attitude Change

This variable was measured by the difference in pre- and post- interviewer impressions of applicant work potential based on application form and interview content, respectively. Prior to the interview, the applicant completed an application form which the interviewer-recruiter in turn evaluated and indicated his impression of the applicant's work potential on the first of two seven-point Likert-type attitude scales that ranged from extremely favorable to extremely unfavorable. Following the interview, the interviewer-recruiter again indicated his impression of the applicant's work potential on an identical Likert-type scale. This scale was utilized because of its simplicity and the high reliability of the

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original Likert scale (.90)³⁰. A sample rating form is shown in Appendix A. The form was folded in half to prevent the interviewer-recruiter from glancing at his initial rating of the applicant. This precaution was taken to insure that the second rating was based on interview content.

Eye Contact Time

This variable was the cumulative length of time the interviewer-recruiter's eyes and the applicant's eyes met in mutual glances during the interview in proportion to total interview length. The position assumed by the observer in the research setting allowed him an unobstructed view of both individuals' eye movements. Eye contact time was measured by direct observation and recorded to the nearest tenth of a second with a stop watch that registered cumulative lapse time. The stop watch was started when both persons' eyes initially met in a mutual glance and stopped when the glance was broken by either individual throughout the interview.

Interview Length

This variable was the amount of time the interviewer-recruiter and the applicant spent discussing the relevant factors of potential employment minus the length of time lost due to interruptions. The beginning of the interview was considered to be the point in time immediately following the customary exchange of pleasantries and introductions. The time was noted on a pocket watch and recorded to the

³⁰Joy Paul Guilford, Psychometric Methods, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., 1954), p. 460.

nearest minute. Likewise, the conclusion of the interview, as indicated by the interviewer-recruiter's decision to allow the applicant a second interview with a first-line supervisor, was noted and recorded in a similar manner.

Dependent Variable

This variable was the interviewer-recruiter's decision whether or not to grant the applicant an interview with a first-line supervisor. Accepted applicants were interviewed by a first-line supervisor as soon as possible. Rejected applicants, however, were informed that their application form would be reviewed at a later date. Interview outcome was measured by direct observation and noted by a plus sign (accepted) or a minus sign (rejected) on the applicant rating form.

Procedure

Prior to the interview, the interviewer-recruiter indicated his impression of the applicant's work potential based on application form content, on the first seven-point Likert-type scale. The applicant was then ushered into the interviewer-recruiter's office and introduced to the observer. Subsequently, the time the interview began was recorded, as was cumulative eye contact time between the interviewer-recruiter and the applicant. Next, the time the interview concluded and the interviewer-recruiter's final decision were noted. Finally, the interviewer-recruiter indicated his impression of the applicant's work potential, based on interview content, on the second seven-point Likert-type scale.

Data Analysis

The design of the present study comprised three independent variables and a dichotomous dependent variable. The independent variables were attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length. The dichotomous dependent variable was interview outcome based on the interviewer-recruiter's decision to accept or reject the applicant.

The data were subjected to three statistical tests. First, a point bi-serial correlation was conducted to show the interrelationship of all the variables.³¹ Next, t-tests were conducted to determine the significance of the mean differences between attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length for the selected applicant group and the rejected applicant group.³² Finally, a multiple discriminant analysis was conducted to indicate the predictive power of the independent variables in determining interview outcome.³³

³¹Allen L. Edwards, Statistical Methods, 2nd ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1967), pp. 123-126.

³²Henry E. Klugh, Statistics: The Essentials for Research, 2nd ed. (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1974), p. 219.

³³Francis J. Kelley et al., Multiple Regression Approach: Research Design in the Behavioral Sciences, (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), pp. 234-240.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Of the fifty-four applicants interviewed, thirty-eight (70.4%) were accepted and sixteen (29.6%) were rejected. The large difference between the percentage of accepted and rejected applicants was due in part to preliminary screening. Prior to the interview a secretary screened the applicants with regard to technical experience, previous employers, and personal history. However, the fact that 29.6 percent of the applicants were rejected indicates that the criteria for the interviewer-recruiter's final decision was not based solely on reference check findings.

The results of the point bi-serial correlation are presented in Table 1. Attitude change was the only independent variable significantly related to interview outcome ($r=.57$). In addition, there was a meager relationship ($r=.23$) between eye contact time and interview outcome which represents a slight trend. However, eye contact time was significantly related to interview length ($r=.66$), thus, indicating that proportionality more eye contact occurred during longer interviews.

Figure 2 shows the graphic representation of the mean pre- and post- interview attitude ratings of the accepted

TABLE 1

INTERCORRELATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES
WITH THE INTERVIEW OUTCOME

	<u>Eye Contact Time</u>	<u>Interview Length</u>	<u>Interview Outcome</u>
Attitude Change	.09	.05	.57
Eye Contact Time		.66	.23
Interview Length			.07

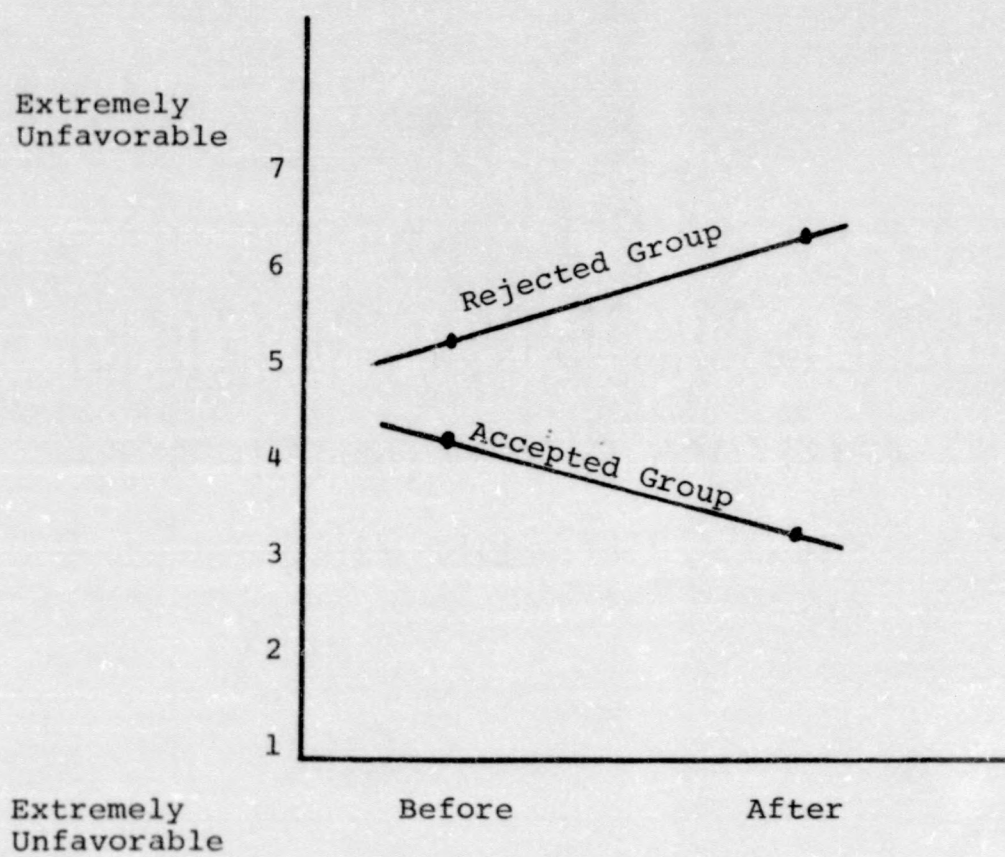


FIGURE 2

Mean Pre- and Post- Interview Attitude Ratings
Showing Intensity and Direction

applicant group and the rejected applicant group. The mean pre- and post- interview ratings for the accepted group were 4.2 and 3.3, respectively. Likewise, the mean pre- and post-interview ratings for the rejected group were 5.3 and 6.3.³⁴ Furthermore, the graph shows that, following the interview, the interviewer-recruiter's attitude shifted in a positive direction for the accepted group but in a negative direction for the rejected group. Overall, the interview nurtured the interviewer-recruiter's initial impression of the accepted applicants, while it reinforced his slightly negative initial impression of the rejected applicants. In addition, the difference in the mean pre- and post- interview ratings for the accepted and rejected groups was 0.9 and 1.0, respectively. Therefore, the interviewer-recruiter's attitude shifted slightly more for the rejected applicants than for the accepted applicants, thereby indicating the interview hindered the rejected applicants more than it helped the accepted applicants.

The t-test results and mean comparisons are shown in Table 2. As can be seen, the mean difference in attitude change between the accepted group and the rejected group was highly significant ($p < .001$). The interviewer-recruiter's attitude changed significantly more among rejected rather than accepted applicants. Therefore, the interviewer-recruiter was apparently more confident about his initial impression of the

³⁴The mean pre- and post- interview ratings for the accepted and rejected applicant groups were subjected to a t-test and found to be insignificant.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF THE MEANS

Variable	Mean	d.f.	t Value	p*
Attitude Change		52	5.01	.001
Accepted Applicant Group	+0.89			
Rejected Applicant Group	-1.00			
Eye Contact Time		52	1.77	.08
Accepted Applicant Group	80.11			
Rejected Applicant Group	49.40			
Interview Length		52	0.56	.57
Accepted Applicant Group	12.78			
Rejected Applicant Group	12.00			

*Two-tailed Probability

accepted applicants than the rejected applicants. In addition, the results show the mean difference in eye contact time between the groups was not significant, although there was a definite trend toward more eye contact in the accepted group. However, the mean difference in interview was at chance level.

The results of the multiple discriminant analysis are presented in the classification matrix shown in Table 3. The matrix reveals that 30 of the 38 accepted applicants (78.95%) were correctly predicted by attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length to fall into the accepted applicant group. Furthermore, 15 of the 16 rejected applicants (93.75%) were correctly predicted to fall into the rejected applicant group. Overall, the independent variables correctly predicted the group membership for 45 of the 54 applicants as represented by the multivariate theta of 83.33 percent. This finding suggests that within the limitations of this study and given the variables of attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length, acceptance or rejection of job applicants can be correctly predicted 83 percent of the time.³⁵

The discriminant weights of the independent variables are shown in Table 4. These weights are analogous to correlation coefficients and indicate the relationship of each

³⁵This suggestion is not conclusive since additional research utilizing a similar group of applicants is required to validate the findings. Time did not allow this additional research to be included in the present study.

TABLE 4

DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS CLASSIFICATION MATRIX USING ATTITUDE
CHANGE, EYE CONTACT TIME, AND INTERVIEW
LENGTH AS PREDICTION VARIABLES

<u>Actual</u>	<u>Predicted</u>		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Accepted Group</u>	<u>Rejected Group</u>	
Accepted Group	30	8	38
Percent	78.95	21.05	
Rejected Group	1	15	16
Percent	6.25	93.75	
<u>Total</u>	31	23	54
Multivariate Theta = .83			

TABLE 5

DISCRIMINANT WEIGHTS OF THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES
AS RELATED TO PREDICTED GROUP MEMBERSHIP

Variables	Discriminant Weights
Attitude Change	.87
Eye Contact Time	.36
Interview Length	.11

variable to predicted group membership. Attitude change (.87) played a significant role in the predictive process, while eye contact time (.36) and interview length (.12) played rather insignificant roles.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The statistical analysis revealed that attitude change was the only independent variable significantly related to interview outcome. During the research reported here, the interviewer-recruiter frequently emphasized that his primary concerns regarding an applicant's suitability for employment were (1) the quality and amount of previous work experience, (2) reasons for leaving previous positions, and (3) specific job skills. Consequently, these concerns were thoroughly explored during the interview and seemed to have an extremely persuasive effect on the interviewer-recruiter's attitude toward the applicant.

The insignificant relationship of eye contact time to interview outcome may have resulted from the observer's presence during the interview. Quite often, the applicant would glance at the observer when responding to interview questions, thereby reducing the amount of eye contact he might normally have initiated with the interviewer-recruiter.

Of the three independent variables, interview length was the least important to interview outcome. This finding substantiates the results of an earlier study conducted by

Huguenard, Sager, and Ferguson.³⁶ However, interview length was not deliberately manipulated in the present study.

The multiple discriminant analysis showed that the three independent variables interacted in such a manner that applicant acceptance or rejection was correctly predicted 83 percent of the time. The discriminant weights of each variable revealed that attitude change played the most significant role in predicting interview outcome, followed by eye contact time and interview length, respectively. Therefore, the obvious inference is that attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length can be utilized to predict acceptance or rejection a significant portion of the time. However, additional research is needed before a definite conclusion can be drawn.

Over 70 percent of the applicants interviewed during the present study were accepted. The interviewer-recruiter accepted almost every qualified and trainable applicant in an effort to meet monthly employment budgets. Under similar circumstances, Carlson found that interviewers offered more employment contracts as a result of being behind scheduled employment quotas.³⁷ Therefore, the interviewer-recruiter probably accepted a larger percentage of applicants under these circumstances than he would if the employment budgets were not applicable.

³⁶Huguenard, Sager, and Ferguson, "Interview Time, Interview Set, and Interview Outcome," pp. 831-836.

³⁷Carlson, "Selection Interview Decision: The Effect of Interviewer Experience, Relative Quota Situation, and Applicant Sample on Interviewer Decision," pp. 259-280.

Implications for Future Research

Future research concerned with communication variables affecting selection interview outcome should concentrate on interview content in relation to interviewer concerns regarding applicant suitability for employment. During the present study, the interviewer-recruiter's final decision seemed to be influenced by applicant responses regarding work experience, previous job positions, and specific job skills. Therefore, an awareness of interviewer concerns evident in interview content may provide a better understanding of the factors that influence interviewer attitudes and, consequently, selection interview outcome.

The present study was conducted on a relatively small scale. Future selection interview outcome research of this nature should be conducted by at least two observers to insure accurate recording of eye contact time. In addition, two or more applicant groups of at least 50 individuals should be observed to provide a comparative basis for the results. Finally, the research results should be validated by determining the number of accepted applicants still employed at a later date

Summary

The present study investigated the relationship of attitude change, eye contact time, and interview length to selection interview outcome. Fifty-four selection interviews

were directly observed in which thirty-eight applicants were accepted and sixteen applicants rejected. The data were subjected to a Pearson r correlation, t -tests, and multiple discriminant analysis. The results indicated that while attitude change was the only independent variable significantly related to interview outcome, all three independent variables interacted to correctly predict group membership 83 percent of the time.

This study was only a stepping stone to better understanding the relationship of selected communication variables to selection interview outcome. The selection interview is an area in desperate need of research by communicologists. The questionable validity of this selection device can only be improved by a thorough knowledge of the interview as a communication process.

APPENDIX A

Name of Applicant _____ Date _____

Time of Appointment _____

Based on application form content, circle the number on the scale below which best indicates your overall impression of the applicant's work potential for FMC.

Extremely Favorable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely Unfavorable

Based on the oral interview, circle the number on the scale below which best indicates your overall impression of the applicant's work potential for FMC.

Extremely Favorable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Extremely Unfavorable

APPENDIX B

Name of Applicant _____ Date _____

Time of Appointment _____

Time interview began _____

Time interview ended _____

Time elapsed _____

Less accumulated interruption time _____

Total time of interview _____

Total accumulated eye contact time _____

Interview outcome _____

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