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17 Functional forms of competence: Interviewing

Abstract: Employment interviews are ubiquitous in the workplace, providing a necessary step in the hiring process and influencing organizational composition and applicant employment. Research pertaining to professional interviewing is frequently conducted outside of the communication discipline, yet the nature of the interview interaction is highly communicative. The purpose of this chapter is to develop a solid foundation for understanding communication in employment interviews by utilizing the concept of communication competence as a theoretical basis. Specifically, we address aspects of communication effectiveness and appropriateness in employment interviews, including how they vary according to the degree of their standardization. For instance, both parties (interviewer and interviewee) have the goal of reducing uncertainty, although the nature of those goals differ (e.g., organizational perspectives regarding potential interviewee performance verses interviewee perceptions of job fit and the likelihood of being offered the job). Directions for future research are presented, including a pressing need for research examining how the two parties adjust communication during the interaction based on perceptions of the other's communication behaviors.

Keywords: employment interviews, job applicant interviews, impression management, uncertainty reduction, instrumental goals, relational goals, self-presentation goals

1 Functional forms of competence: Interviewing

In Western cultures, it is almost inconceivable to obtain a job without going through at least one interview. Indeed, as Huffcutt and Culbertson (2011: 185) noted, "It would appear that there is a basic human need to want personal contact with others before placing them in a position of importance ... as if a part of the human make-up does not trust objective information completely." Even if an applicant looks stellar in all respects and clearly would be a great addition to the organization (e.g., credentials, accomplishments), it is likely that someone in the hiring organization hierarchy would still want to see them in person. Not surprisingly, employment interviews are one of the most widely researched aspects of organizations.

While other techniques are also utilized in organizational selection, such as tests of mental ability and personality, what distinguishes employment interviews is that they represent a *communication event* between the organization and the

applicants. Applicants have the opportunity to articulate their qualifications, and in the process, attempt to convince the interviewer that they are a viable choice for the job. Conversely, the interviewer seeks to gather as much information as possible in order to make his/her own evaluation of the merits of each applicant. Further, applicants may utilize the interview to obtain additional information about the nature of the job and those they would be working with, and also the climate and culture of the organization (Jablin 1987; Kinser 2002). Similarly, the interviewer may provide additional information to the applicants to promote the job and/or the organization.

Of both scientific and practical significance is the idea that the communication between applicants and interviewers is typically interactive. Once an interview begins, both parties have an opportunity to co-create meaning through mutual listening, processing, and formulating responses. Indeed, interview communication can be thought of a spiral, with the back and forth interaction determining the size and nature of the various loops, their intricate tangents, and the directions in which they go. Moreover, because each applicant is different, the overall communication (including the degree of co-created meaning) is likely to vary considerably from applicant to applicant, often ending up in unexpected directions. Just like the number of possible spiral patterns, the number of potential interview communication patterns is virtually unlimited.

Yet, and somewhat surprisingly, the communication aspects of interviews have been one of the least researched among the array of possible employment interview topics. The most popular topics appear to revolve around psychometric characteristics such as reliability and validity (e.g., Berry, Sackett, and Landers 2007), which is not surprising given that they relate directly to their usefulness (e.g., accuracy) for selecting new employees. Other popular topics include the cognitive decision-making processes of interviewers (e.g., Struthers, Colwill, and Perry 1992), the influence of demographic features such as race and gender (e.g., McCarthy, Van Iddekinge, and Campion 2010), the impact of nonverbal communication such as posture, smiling, and nodding (e.g., Tsai, Huang, and Yu 2012), applicant reactions such as fairness (e.g., Truxillo, Steiner, and Gilliland 2004), and impression management (Levashina and Campion 2007).

Further, research on interview communication tends to be one-way, such as the influence that the applicant has on the interviewer *or* the influence that the interviewer has on the applicant. To illustrate, research on impression management, one of the most communication-based topics in the interview literature, addresses the strategies that applicants use to create a favorable impression on the interviewer (Barrick, Shaffer, and DeGrassi 2009). For instance, applicants may use ingratiation as a deliberate strategy to compliment the interviewer and increase his/her liking of them (Ellis et al. 2002). What is not typically addressed is how those strategies influence the thought processes and subsequent communication of the interviewer, and in turn, how the modified communication of the interviewer affects the applicants.

In summary, research on the communication aspects of employment interviews appears to be a secondary topic, often explored in a tangential and unidirectional manner. The lack of a strong theoretical grounding appears to be a contributing factor. With this in mind, the purpose of this chapter is to develop a solid theoretical foundation for understanding communication in employment interviews, utilizing the concept of communication competence from the communication literature (an area that seems of obvious relevance, but is rarely utilized in interview research). We begin with a careful analysis of the key aspects of communication in employment interviews. Then we discuss what constitutes communication competence, including the role of goals and motivation, and further, how communication principles can be applied to employment interviews. Following that, implications of structuring (i.e., standardizing) the interview format are examined. We conclude with a discussion of future directions and suggestions for enhancing the employment interview as a means of communication within the workplace.

2 Unique aspects of communication in employment interviews

Communication is an evolving, cooperative process that goes beyond the simple sharing of information. Verbal and nonverbal messages are exchanged, relational cues are observed and interpreted, and lasting perceptions are formed (Baxter 2004; Braithwaite and Baxter 2008). To fully constitute communication, both parties must be interactively engaged and play an important role. Many forms of communication would fall under this rubric, including interaction among peers, with significant others, between parents and children, and between employees and their managers.

That said, there are some unique aspects of employment interviews that distinguish them from more traditional interactions. Specifically, there are five key aspects of communication in interview settings, which are described below. Individually, these aspects may not sound particularly unusual, but in combination, they unite to form a unique communication dynamic. In fact, we argue that very few interactions contain all five of these aspects, making interviews worthy of additional study from a communicative perspective.

First, in most cases the applicant and the interviewer do not know each other prior to being introduced as part of the employment selection process. There may be exceptions, such as when both are from the local community (particularly a smaller one), belong to a mutual social or athletic organization (or have children in them), and/or the applicant has interviewed with that organization previously. But, in a vast majority of cases, the two parties meet for the first time.

Second, the interaction between the applicant and the interviewer is typically of very limited duration. Employment interviews often average around 20–30 min-

utes. When the interview is over, the interaction generally ends. The only exception would be when an applicant is brought back for a second interview with the same interviewer. Even then, the total time of their interaction (combined from both interviews) is still relatively short.

Third, roles and expectations are clearly defined prior to an interview (Kinser 2002). Considering the first two aspects, this one is particularly unique. Despite the fact that applicants and interviewers will have just met and that they will only interact for a short time, both know what role they should play and have clear expectations as to the process (particularly the unofficial "rules" that should be followed, such as allowing the interviewer to take the lead). Specifically, applicants know they will be asked about their background, their qualifications, and their reasons for desiring that position. Yet, at the same time, their goal is to present themselves in the best possible light, which may involve selective presentation of themselves. Interviewers know that they are expected to take the lead in the interview, and that their goal is to uncover as much relevant information as possible (see Einhorn 1981).

Fourth, there is uncertainty regarding the content and/or tone of the interview. Despite pre-established roles and expectations, applicants do not have a clear picture of how the interview will proceed once it starts. While it is true that there are ritualized formalities such as exchanging names and asking how the other party is doing (Berger and Bradac 1982), beyond that there is uncertainty. As noted earlier, each interview is different, and can go off in different, even unexpected, directions. Applicants may anticipate some of the questions (e.g., strengths and weaknesses), but cannot anticipate all of them. Further, they cannot know ahead of time whether the interviewer will be outgoing or quiet, or whether the interviewer will even like them. On the other side of the desk, the interviewer does not know ahead of time whether an applicant will be lively and enthusiastic or more shy and withdrawn.

Fifth, there is a considerable difference in power status. As a representative of the hiring organization, the interviewer clearly has power over the applicants because he/she gets to decide whom to hire (or least whom to recommend). That power is amplified because the outcome is not just obtaining the job, but also the benefits, opportunities for promotion, and retirement funding that go along with it. In short, the interviewer has the power to make a decision that will have a life-long influence on the applicants. It is important to note that some applicants may have power as well, but not in the same sense. That is, once an offer is extended, the power may shift in that the applicant can decline it or make certain demands during the negotiation process. For highly desirable applicants who are sought after by multiple organizations, this can be considerable power. Nevertheless, the issue here is the interaction that takes place during the employment interview, in which the interviewer typically holds the power.

In summary, interview communication entails a temporary exchange between two unfamiliar people, one where there are clear goals and expectations, a marked differential in power, and potentially high stakes in the outcome, yet with a rela-

tively high degree of uncertainty remaining. While there are a number of communication contexts that contain some and perhaps many of these features, there are few that contain all of them. To better understand the unique dynamics of communication in the context of interviews, it seems logical to turn to the field of communication itself.

3 Communication competence in employment interviews

Considering the centrality of communication throughout the employment interview process, *communication competence* serves as a particularly useful theoretical framework in interpreting existing research and framing future studies. Communication competence involves perceptions of two key aspects of an interaction: *effectiveness* and *appropriateness*. We review both of these aspects below.

3.1 Interaction effectiveness

Effectiveness is a judgment made by an individual regarding his/her ability to accomplish individual goals as a result of the interaction. An interaction would be deemed effective if that individual thought he/she stood to achieve desired goals, and ineffective if not. There are numerous goals that interviewers and applicants can have within an employment interview context. For example, as an overarching goal, the employment interview occurs to determine whether a relationship – the employment relationship – will develop after the interview. In this manner, both the applicant and the interviewer must decide whether to avoid, restrict, or seek future contact. In the employment context, will the interviewer offer a job and will the applicant accept an offer if one is made?

Beyond the overarching goal of determining employment, there are other, more specific goals that interviewers and applicants have when engaging in an employment interview. We provide a brief outline of goals along with relevant research related to them. We note that these goal categories are not necessarily exhaustive or mutually exclusive. Rather, we offer them simply as a framework for better understanding the ways in which people may direct their motivations in order to be more effective in employment interviews.

3.1.1 Uncertainty reduction and predictability enhancement goals

In line with the basic tenets of Berger and Calabrese's (1975) uncertainty reduction theory (URT) and Sunnafrank's (1986) predicted outcome value theory (POV), *both interviewers and applicants have goals of reducing uncertainty and increasing pre-*

dictability. Although interviews generate cognitive uncertainty (apprehension regarding beliefs and attitudes of oneself and relational others), they generally are highly routinized and not likely to create considerable behavioral uncertainty (concerns or doubts regarding the predictability of behavior in certain situations; Berger 1979; Berger and Bradec 1982).

As URT and POV suggest, interviewers have an explicit goal of becoming more certain about the applicant as a potential hire, ultimately trying to predict how well the applicant will perform on the job. Being in the position of control (at least during the interview itself), interviewers are presumably able to engage in multiple forms of uncertainty reduction behaviors. Whether utilizing passive (i.e., unobtrusive observation of applicants), active (i.e., seeking information from third parties or through manipulation of the interview environment), or interactive strategies (i.e., obtaining information from applicants directly through interrogative means), interviewers can elicit information that serves to reduce their uncertainty regarding the applicant and achieve their own goals for the interaction.

On the other hand, applicants also want to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability. Specifically, applicants want to get a feel for whether they are managing impressions effectively and if they will ultimately be offered the job. Even those applicants who may enter an interview in a position of power (e.g., they are the top choice and have alternative offers) are still likely on the lower end of the power differential, at least until an offer is extended. As such, while they can still engage in uncertainty reduction behaviors, they are most likely to be passive lest they run the risk of usurping the established power differential and upsetting the natural balance of the employment interview.

3.1.2 Instrumental goals

Interviewers and applicants also have individual goals that vary throughout the interview interaction and can shift in importance as the conversation unfolds. One such goal category that relates to communication competence is instrumental goals, or goals that focus on a tangible outcome (Canary and Lakey 2013; Clark and Delia 1979). Instrumental goals tend to be one of the most salient goals and are easy to identify because of their explicit focus on demonstrable results (Cupach, Canary, and Spitzberg 2010). For example, an interviewer's instrumental goal is generally to identify the best applicant for a position. An applicant's instrumental goal is to gain an offer of employment. These goals may be mutually compatible. However, if an interviewer is assessing multiple applicants, these goals may conflict. For example, the interviewer may want to hire the applicant but offer a lower salary range or different job duties than the applicant desires, the interviewer may view the applicant as less qualified or suitable for the position compared to other applicants and not extend an offer, or the applicant may compare the position with others he/she has interviewed for and decline an offer.

3.1.3 Relational goals

Yet another type of goal that is present in interviews and relates to communication competence is the relational/interpersonal goal (Canary and Lakey 2013; Clark and Delia 1979). Specifically, "relational goals involve achieving, maintaining, and de-escalating a relationship" (Canary and Lakey 2013: 151). Relational goals are also important in the interviewing process as both the interviewer and applicant must determine if they would like to pursue a working relationship with each other in the future.

Einhorn (1981) highlighted the importance of making relational connections with organizations and interviewers, noting that successful applicants directly reference the organization four times more frequently and refer directly to the interviewers three times more frequently compared to unsuccessful applicants. Thus, rather than treating an interview as simply a screening process, successful applicants actively work to relate directly to the interviewers to build relational connections and rapport. Interviewers also see the importance of rapport-building, with many interviewers disregarding researchers' suggestions for the reduction of unstructured interaction (discussed in the following section on the influence of interview standardization), and instead opting to include unstructured interaction and "small talk" into their interviews (e.g., as a way to put applicants at ease; Chapman and Zweig 2005).

Preliminary results suggest that the communication processes involved in the rapport-building phase do influence subsequent interview processes (Chapman and Zweig 2005; Barrick, Swider, and Stewart 2010). For example, researchers have found that rapport building impacts the interviewer's ratings of applicants, even when the information covered is not job-relevant (Barrick, Swider, and Stewart 2012). However, this research line was never developed sufficiently to assess the actual communication interplay and resulting effects. For instance, it is possible that applicants who skillfully navigate the small-talk phase gain an advantage because the interviewer becomes more positive about them and asks them easier questions during the actual interview. Nevertheless, considering the constitutive process of communication, relationship goals are an important aspect to account for in the interview context. The interviewer and applicant must be able to see the relationship as worth continuing, even if the interviewer will not work directly with the applicant.

3.1.4 Self-presentation goals

Finally, individuals may have self-presentation/identity goals (Canary and Lakey 2013; Clark and Delia 1979). Self-presentation goals reflect how individuals present themselves to others and how the communicated image reflects the individual's

identity (Lakey and Canary 2013). Interviews can be particularly threatening for applicants seeking employment. From their initial contact with the interviewer, applicants must strive to present themselves in the best possible manner. As applicants attempt to project an image of competence and that they are worthy of hire, they work on presenting a positive identity to the interviewer. However, applicants also realize that they are being compared to others who have similar qualifications. Regardless of whether they are hired, applicants generally want to be viewed in the best possible light and project their identity in ways to highlight positive qualities. Simultaneously, the interviewer also wants to be seen as competent as an individual and as a representative of the organization.

It is a commonly accepted notion that first impressions matter (e.g., Hogarth and Einhorn 1992; Mantonakis et al. 2009), and research on the employment interview has supported this proposition. For example, how an applicant is dressed can have an impact on how the interviewer rates the applicant (Forsythe 1990), as can the applicant's handshake at the start of the interview (Stewart et al. 2008). Indeed, there are common norms for such things, and applicants who are able to make better initial impressions in employment interviews (e.g., through rapport building, as described above) are more likely to be evaluated more positively and have a better chance of getting an employment offer compared to applicants who fail to make as good a first impression (Barrick et al. 2012; Barrick, Swider, and Stewart 2010).

Impression management, of course, is not limited to initial interactions, but rather exists throughout the entire employment interview process. Social interactions are rife with influence tactics (Rusbult and Van Lange 2003), and the employment interview is no different. Applicants frequently engage in behaviors intended to portray themselves in a different, more positive light to interviewers. Within employment interviews, there are four distinct types of faking behaviors: slight image creation, extensive image creation, image protection, and ingratiation (Levashina and Campion 2007). Image protection (e.g., the omission or masking of potentially questionable or negative details from one's responses) and ingratiation (e.g., flattering the interviewer and/or the organization) involve minor distortions of the truth to appear stronger or more interpersonally attractive to the interviewer. Similarly, slight image creation includes embellishment, tailoring, and fit-enhancing, a form of deception in which, according to Levin and Zickar (2002), nearly everyone engages. Conversely, extensive image creation includes constructing, inventing, and/or borrowing facts about one's qualifications and experiences. Whether minor distortions or outright fabrication, impression management attempts within employment interviews are particularly prevalent (Ellis et al. 2002; Levashina and Campion 2007; Weiss and Feldman 2006). To put it in perspective, Levashina and Campion (2007) reported that over 90 percent of undergraduate job applicants engaged in faking during employment interviews.

It has even been suggested that such impression management tactics are so commonplace that they are almost expected of applicants. As Swider et al. (2011:

1283) noted, "Interviewers expect, even demand, that interviewees describe their past experiences positively when given an experience-based question during the structured interview. Thus, when savvy interviewees 'polish' their image and convey they are valuable employees (i.e., self-promotion), they benefit." As such, it appears that there is not as much of an expectation for complete truthfulness within employment interviews as there is for "strategic truthfulness" aimed at presenting oneself in the best, most appealing light as possible.

Of course, the ways in which applicants present themselves is not always intentional. As noted above, there is some research in the interview literature on the influence of applicant nonverbal communication on interviewers. This research has focused primarily on aspects such as smiling, handshake, and posture, and generally has found some (albeit modest) effects on interviewers and their ratings. For instance, in a meta-analysis, Curtin (2003) found a positive and significant correlation between a composite of nonverbal behaviors and cues (i.e., he combined all nonverbal variables into a single latent variable) and interviewer ratings. Further, he found that nonverbal cues acted as a partial moderator between verbal content and interviewer ratings (see also Levine and Feldman 2002; Rasmussen 1984).

Although more limited, there is also some research focusing on paralinguistic aspects of communication in interviews. For instance, DeGroot and Motowidlo (1999) used sophisticated voice and speech software and found that a vocal cue composite that included pitch, pitch variability, speech rate, pauses, and amplitude variability correlated .32 with interviewer ratings. In a different vein, Lievens and Peeters (2008) found that self-focused, verbal impression management attempts correlated .40 with ratings on a structured interview focusing on past experiences. Collectively, this body of research suggests that paralinguistic features such as these can exert significant influence on interviewers and on the ratings they make.

3.2 Interaction appropriateness

The other key aspect of communication competence, appropriateness, is determined by each interactant. It is a judgment made by one party regarding the extent to which the other party meets expectations and follows social norms appropriate for that interaction. For instance, a person on a first date might believe the interaction to be inappropriate if the other person starts talking about marriage. In regards to employment interviews, an applicant should view the interaction as appropriate if the interviewer sets the pace and tempo and dictates the flow of the conversation.

Unfortunately, research involving appropriateness in interviews is relatively sparse. One area that has garnered relatively little attention and has not developed further is that of "relational control", which assesses who, within a relationship, is in control (Engler-Parish and Millar 1989). Within the employment interview con-

text, this refers to the interplay of applicant and interviewer attempts at dominance and the resulting effects. In one of the few studies in this area, Tullar (1989) found that when interviewers attempted to structure the conversation, unsuccessful applicants tried to structure the conversation in return. In contrast, consistent with the notion of complementarity (e.g., Moskowitz, Ho, and Turcotte-Tremblay 2007), successful applicants tended to be submissive when the interviewer was dominant and dominant when the interviewer was submissive. Essentially, matching communication patterns of dominance or submissiveness were perceived as less favorable compared to complementary patterns.

3.3 Interaction skill, knowledge, and motivation

In addition to effectiveness and appropriateness, communication competence is largely determined by an individual's skill, knowledge, and motivation in the exchange (Cupach and Canary 2000). While the concept of communication competence has largely been applied in conflict research (Canary and Spitzberg 1990) and health communication (Wright et al. 2013), it offers an important lens to view the interview process as well to examine how interviewer and applicants meet goals and expectations (Spano and Zimmerman 1995). While at some level individuals seek to meet instrumental, relational, and self-presentation goals of their own and the other party, these goals can vary in both level of abstraction and importance throughout employment interviews.

Relevant to this discussion is the notion of social skills (Ferris, Witt, and Hochwarter 2001), a concept that has been studied to a relatively small extent within the employment interview context (e.g., Schuler and Funke 1989; see Salgado and Moscoso 2002 for a meta-analysis of six correlations). Such limited treatment is unfortunate, as social skills could play a central role in interview communication. For instance, social skills could be the underlying construct behind specific communicative practices such as impressions management and relational control.

Additional relevant concepts when discussing skill, knowledge, and motivation can be borrowed from social psychology. For instance, Lee (1996) found some support for the idea that applicants higher on self-monitoring would vary the warmth of their nonverbal behaviors depending on the warmth of the interviewer, while applicants lower on self-monitoring would not adapt or change their behavior based on their interviewer. Other social constructs such as attributional tendencies and conformity could also add to our understanding of competent interview communication. For instance, the degree to which interviewers make attributions of competence early on in the interview and the resulting effects on subsequent communication could be examined.

4 The influence of interview standardization on communication

One of the most highly researched aspects of the employment interview is structure, namely the level of standardization inherent in the interview questions and response scoring. In a completely unstructured interview, the content and the evaluation process are left largely up to the discretion of the interviewer. In a highly structured interview, there is a high level of standardization across applicants in terms of both the questions asked and the scoring procedures used (Campion, Palmer, and Campion 1998).

The rationale for using a highly structured interview is that it reduces the procedural variability across applicants (Huffcutt and Arthur 1994). In such interviews, the same questions are posed to all applicants, in the same order, with the same amount of time allowed for responses. Even probing for further information is minimized, if not entirely avoided, within such interviews. In addition, performance in highly structured interviews is determined on the basis of a standardized scoring system, with behaviorally anchored rating scales provided for each question individually. In some ways, the highly structured interview with its greater emphasis on standardization and lower focus on rapport building (Chapman and Zweig 2005) is almost akin to a paper-and-pencil psychological test (e.g., mental ability, personality) or an oral exam in which the interviewer asks the same questions to all applicants, with little room for open, unstructured dialogue.

In terms of how structured interviews fare in practice, researchers have consistently found that highly structured interviews, compared to their unstructured counterparts, are preferable as they tend to be more reliable (Conway, Jako, and Goodman 1995; Huffcutt, Culbertson, and Weyhrauch 2013), better predictors of job performance (Huffcutt, Culbertson, and Weyhrauch 2014; Wiesner and Cronshaw 1988), and fairer, with fewer mean differences on the basis of sex and race (Huffcutt and Roth 1998).

With such evidence, it is not surprising that much attention has been paid to the way in which structure can be enhanced within interviews, including the types of questions that can or should be asked. For example, two specific types of questions, *situational* (i.e., future-oriented "what would you do" questions; Latham et al. 1980) and *behavior description* (i.e., past-oriented "tell me about a time when" questions; Janz 1982), have received considerable attention from organizational scholars. When these specific question types are utilized within employment interviews, structure is enhanced, and consequently reliability, validity, and fairness similarly heightened; the routinization of the discussion between the interviewer and the applicant is similarly increased.

Despite the overwhelming empirical evidence suggesting that structure in employment interviews is ideal from a psychometric perspective (in that it increases the reliability and predictive validity of the interview), interviewers frequently dis-

miss researchers' suggestions for the reduction of unstructured interaction, opting to go "off script" in order to build rapport and put applicants at ease (Barrick et al. 2012; Chapman and Zweig 2005). As Barrick et al. (2012: 331) noted, "there is a limit to the amount of structure that can be imposed upon the interview before it becomes an impersonal, mechanical process". Unstructured interviews afford the interviewer a great deal of discretion in the questions asked, as well as what would constitute a good versus poor response. In such interviews, the interviewer poses whatever question he or she desires of applicants, allowing as much or as little probing as deemed necessary, with however much time applicants need for responding. Such interviews are often rated using a global scale, with the interviewer making a holistic judgment of the applicant's performance.

Although the empirical literature derived from management and psychology suggests that structured interviews are ideal, communication scholars have questioned the supposed unbiased nature of highly structured interviews (Buzzanell 1999; Kinser 2002). Whereas structured interviews are often used in order to remove bias and create an equal playing field (Buzzanell 1999), this format also operates on assumptions that ideal applicants will demonstrate "task orientation, self-promotion, and competition" (Kinser 2002: 249). Specifically, these assumptions mirror stereotypical expectations for a masculinized ideal worker (Trethewey 1999). As Trethewey (2000: para. 9) explains:

> In a very real sense, organizations valorize traits and characteristics that are stereotypically masculine, including an emphasis on rationality, long-range and abstract concerns, assertiveness and the drive for individual success. In contrast, the traits that are typically attributed to women, such as an emphasis on feeling or emotion, devotion to detail, and an orientation toward affiliative relationships, are often denied legitimacy in organizational life.

Further, highly structured interview practices not only prefer masculine, dominant-group communication behaviors (i.e., assertiveness, direct eye contact), but also limit the opportunity for non-dominant groups (e.g., non-White, feminine) to explain their qualifications in a less direct manner through rapport building (Buzzanell 1999). Therefore, various structures in interviewing formats offer different benefits and constraints on interactions during the interview process, necessitating consideration when selecting a format.

5 Future directions

Research reviewed in this chapter highlights aspects of the communication process in the interview context. While the chapter notes studies which intersect with verbal and nonverbal communication research, there are many ways communication scholars can add to this conversation. Indeed messages and nonverbal cues are central in how interviewers and applicants coordinate information-sharing and de-

velop impressions regarding "fit" during the interview process, yet the predominance of research in this area has occurred in other disciplines.

Communication scholars are well-poised to extend understanding of employment interviews through application of communication theories and research. Specifically, communication competence is a useful theoretical lens to explore how individuals use appropriateness to meet others' goals, while gauging effectiveness in satisfying their own goals during an interview. Communication competence can be used as an overarching framework to explore and evaluate individual verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors and interactional two-way coordination of communication. In addition, it can be used at organizational and macro (societal) levels using a range of more specific interpersonal and organization communication theories.

At the individual level, interviewers and applicants likely have different, although not always competing, goals in mind. Analysis of message strategy (including nonverbal manipulations) prior to the interview for each of these parties could offer insight into the interview exchange and effective outcomes. This speaks to many educational programs where job applicants are "taught" or "coached in" communication techniques for interviewing (i.e. Pope-Ruark 2008). Further, message strategy would be of interest to interviewers in terms of modifying communication to illicit reliable responses and reduce biases that may occur in interview interactions. Additionally, communication competence in relation to identity management theory (Cupach and Imahori 1993) could extend current understanding of how parties manage their communication to meet identity goals, particularly in interviews involving cultural differences.

Perhaps one of the most pressing areas for further research occurs at the dyadic level in terms of how the "process" of communication impacts assessments of both parties regarding the competence of self and other. For example, communication accommodation theory (Giles and Ogay 2007) or interaction adaptation theory (Burgoon, Stern, and Dillman 1995; Floyd and Burgoon 1999) could help further identify how individuals adjust communication during the interaction based on their perceptions of their interview partner's communication behaviors. Also, interpersonal deception theory (Burgoon and Buller 1984) provides an interesting interactive theoretical framework regarding how individuals employ and detect genuine versus contrived communication behaviors during the course of an interaction; this research could be quite informative for interviewing, particularly as organizations want to hire the most qualified applicant over someone who is embellishing qualifications. Further, dialectic theory (Baxter 1990) would be useful in understanding the tensions that exist and influence communication behaviors between an interviewer and applicant in terms of information content and disclosures. Finally, Jablin (1987) readily identifies the interview as part of the anticipatory socialization stage in organizational assimilation theory, yet deeper analysis of communication disclosures and cues during the interview process may offer insight for applicants, interviewers, and other organizational members.

Considering a larger organizational view of communication patterns and processes, organizational sensemaking theory (Weick, Sutcliffe, and Obstfeld 2005) provides a fruitful way to explore how organizational members frame and make sense of the interview interaction over time through communication, meaning-making, and the resulting processes supporting that understanding. Further, Giddens' (1986) theory of structuration provides a lens to explore the duality of structure and the ways in which agents produce, reproduce, and resist organizational norms throughout interview communication exchanges that then relate to larger organizational discourses of structure.

While these theoretical lenses are certainly not exhaustive, they illustrate that the communication field is well-poised to enhance the current understanding of interview processes as a unique interpersonal and organizational communication event. Communication competence, including effectiveness in reaching goals and appropriateness in meeting others' expectations, weaves through the interview process and potential theoretical frames at multiple levels. However, as this chapter notes, although employment interviews are not heavily studied by communication scholars, research pertaining to verbal and nonverbal communication during the interview process is not lacking. Clearly interviews are a central process to organizations and individuals' employment. What might be most exciting is the opportunity for interdisciplinary approaches to this important topic, enabling a more nuanced perspective on the interview process that spans across different fields of study. The research included in this chapter points to productive partnerships across disciplines to better understand the employment interview.

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