Structured Interviews and Avoiding Bias
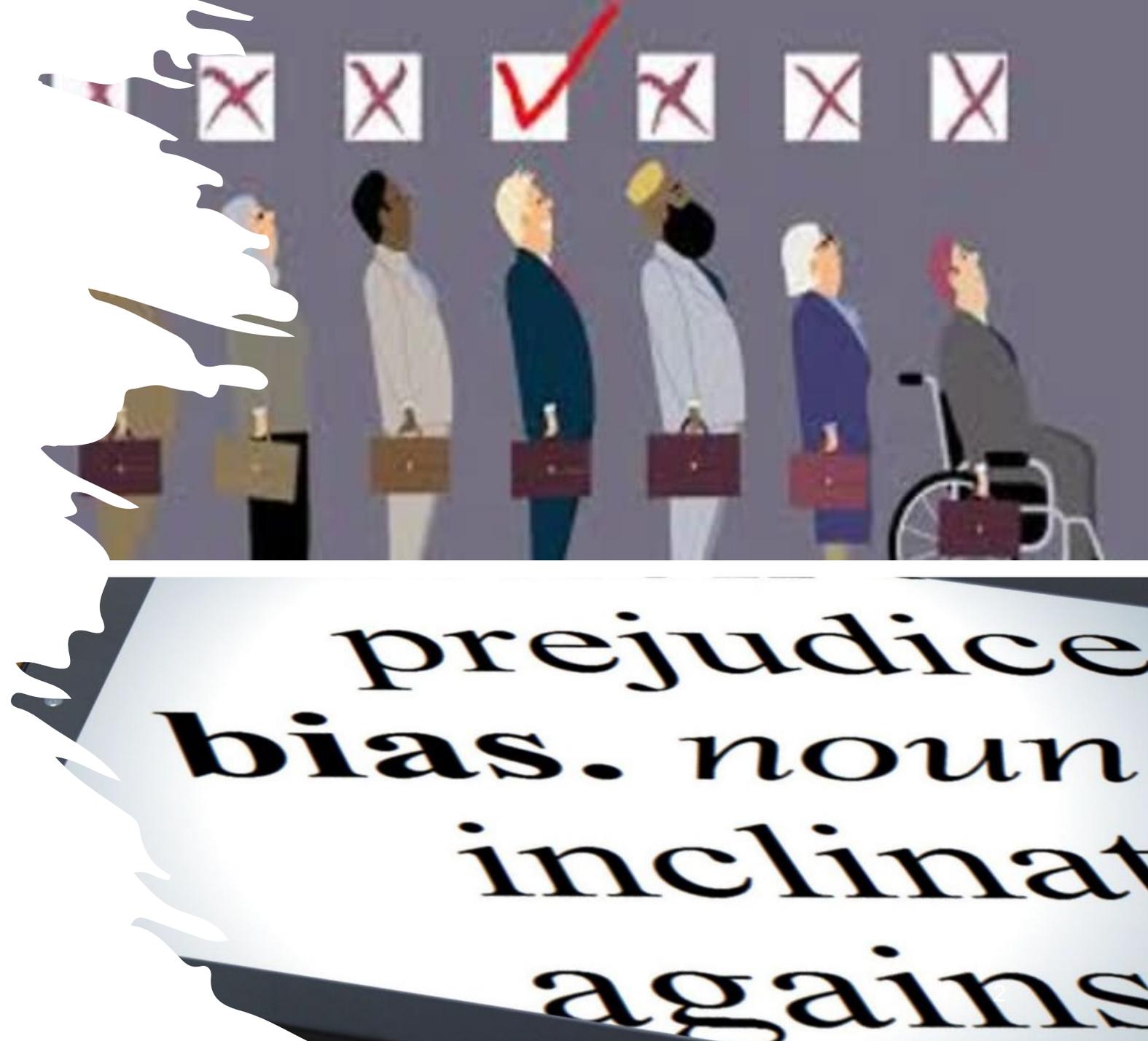
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Overview

- What is a structured interview?
- Considerations for hiring interviews
- Key features
- Conducting the interview
- Bias
- Interview tips
- Takeaways

What is a Structured Interview?

- A type of job interview systematically asking about a candidate's behavior and job-related competencies
  - In past experiences
  - In hypothetical situations
- Each candidate receives the same opportunity to demonstrate competencies
  - Standardized questioning
  - Standardized scoring process

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Structured Interview

- Questions based on job-related competencies
- All candidates asked the same questions in same order
- Interviewers take detailed notes on responses
- All responses evaluated using the same rating scales and standards for acceptable answers
- Structured approach = more likely to identify high-performing employees

Strengths	Considerations
High validity and face validity for applicants	Requires SME involvement to develop
Multiple ratings/consensus leads to increased reliability	Resource intensive administration and rating process
Legally defensible compared to unstructured, conventional interviews	Assessors must be trained in conducting and rating the interviews

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• **Competency: Interpersonal Skills** - Shows understanding, friendliness, courtesy, tact, empathy, concern, and politeness to others; develops and maintains effective relationships with others; may include effectively dealing with individuals who are difficult, hostile, or distressed; relates well to people from varied backgrounds and different situations; is sensitive to cultural diversity, race, gender, disabilities, and other individual differences.

• **Lead Question:** Describe a situation in which you dealt with individuals who were difficult, hostile, or distressed.

• **Probing Questions:** Who was involved? What specific actions did you take? What was the outcome?

SI: Example Rating Scale

Proficiency Level	1- Low	2	3-Average	4	5-Outstanding
Benchmark Definition	Handles interpersonal situations involving little or no tension or discomfort		Handles interpersonal situations involving a moderate degree of tension or discomfort		Handles interpersonal situations involving a high degree of tension or discomfort
	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4	Example 5
Behavioral Example	Refers employees to the appropriate staff member	Works with others on a cross-functional team	Establishes cooperative working relationships with manager	Facilitates an open forum to discuss employee concerns	Diffuses an emotionally charged meeting with external stakeholders

Considerations for Hiring Interviews

- Utilized to add consistency

- Hiring vs. rating and ranking

- Preserving vets preference

Key Features

- Choose competencies

- Question types

- Probe questions

Choose Competencies

- Ensure competencies are included in job analysis
- Structured Interviews are well-suited for assessing "soft skill" competencies, such as
  - Teamwork
  - Interpersonal Skills
  - Conflict Management
- Choose around 4-6 competencies to assess per interview
- Use one or more question per competency
  - Will depend on complexity of competency

Interview Questions

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- Based on the "STAR" model
  - Situation or Task – Describes the context or background for the event or tasks involved
  - Action – Describes exactly what was done or what would be done
  - Result – Describes the consequences of the candidate's actions

Question Types

- Behavioral
  - Draw from a candidate's past experiences
  - Best predictor of future behavior is past behavior under similar circumstances
- Situational
  - Present realistic job scenarios or problems and ask how candidates would respond
  - People's intentions are closely related to their actual behavior

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Probe Questions

- "Follow up" questions
- Guide the candidate in providing sufficient information
- Each question has a list of acceptable probe questions
- Narrow in on candidates' specific actions
- No yes/no questions
- Do not stray from pre-defined probes

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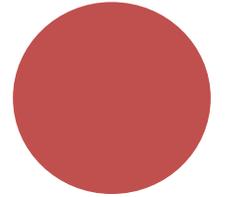
BIAS

Types of Bias

- Confirmation Bias

- Anchoring Bias

- Selection Bias

- Observer Bias

- Information Bias

- The tendency to seek out information that supports something you already believe (you remember the hits and forget the misses). People will cue into things that matter to them, and dismiss the things that don't (Ostrich effect).

- Relying too heavily on the first piece of information they receive

- The way individuals notice things more when something has happened to make us notice that particular thing more

- Occurs when your evaluation of another person is influenced by your own inherent cognitive biases.

- Bias that refers to the idea that getting more information will help in better decision-making, even if the extra information is irrelevant to the actual subject at hand

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Types of Bias

- In-Group Bias

- Cultural Bias

- Fundamental Attribution Error

- Availability Bias

- Self-Serving Bias

- How people are more likely to support or believe someone within their own social group than an outsider

- An unconscious bias where we perceive other cultures as being unique based on a comparison to our own. It creates attitudes or stereotypes that can affect or influence our decisions in an unconscious way.

- Attributing someone else's behavior to existing, unfounded stereotypes, while attributing that similar behavior in yourself to external factors

- The tendency to use the information we can quickly recall when evaluating a topic or idea-even if the information is not the best representation of the topic or idea.

- Assumption that good things happen to use when we've done all the right things, but bad things happen to us because or circumstances outside of our control

Bias

- Bias due to knowledge of predictor information
- Bias due to group membership
- Bias in Ratings

Interviewer Tips

❑ Create a comfortable atmosphere

❑ Be an attentive and unbiased listener

❑ Take comprehensive notes

❑ Remain objective and fair

❑ Treat all candidates the same

❑ Be organized and prepared

❑ Look and act cordial, interested, and professional

Interviewer Tips

- Know the competencies, questions, rating scale, and example responses
- Focus on the candidates' responses, not the candidate
- Take detailed notes on the responses, not the candidate
- Compare the responses to the example responses for each rating level using the rating rubric
- Remain objective

Interviewer Tips

- Ensure a positive atmosphere (in person or online)
  - Helps put candidates at ease
  - Encourages candidates to go into more detail
  - Promotes a positive image of the organization
- Build a positive atmosphere by
  - Greeting, introductions, and professionalism
  - Using candidates' names (correctly)
  - Treating candidates with respect
  - Making eye contact
  - Thanking candidates for their time

Preparation

- All candidates should receive same amount of time
  - Allow time for introductions, instructions, responses to each question, an informal discussion about the position, and determining ratings for each question
- Ensure adequate facilities for interview
  - Should be quiet, comfortable, and accessible
  - Candidates should not come into contact with one another

Candidate Arrival

- Ensure someone meets the candidate at security desk and lead them to interview location (if applicable)
  - Adjust if virtual
- Greet the candidate and introduce yourself
- Explain the interview process
- Ask if the candidate has any questions
- Formally begin the interview

Questioning

- Ask the same pre-determined questions in the same order
  - Probes may be used if necessary
- Be aware of your body language and facial expressions
- Never ask about any non-relevant, potentially discriminatory information

Taking Notes

- Take detailed notes of the candidates' responses
  - Summarize the content of actual responses
  - Be professional and non-judgmental
- Notes should not
  - Be evaluative
  - Refer to demographic characteristics of candidate

Wrap Up

- After the candidate has responded to all questions, conclude the interview
  - Thank the candidate
  - Ask the candidate to keep interview details confidential
  - Answer general questions about the position
  - Explain the next steps in the hiring process
  - Ensure they know how to exit the building or have them escorted out

Things to Avoid

- **Don't rely on first impressions**

- **Don't focus on superficial factors**

- **Beware candidate order effects**

- **Disregard nonverbal behaviors**

- **Going off script**
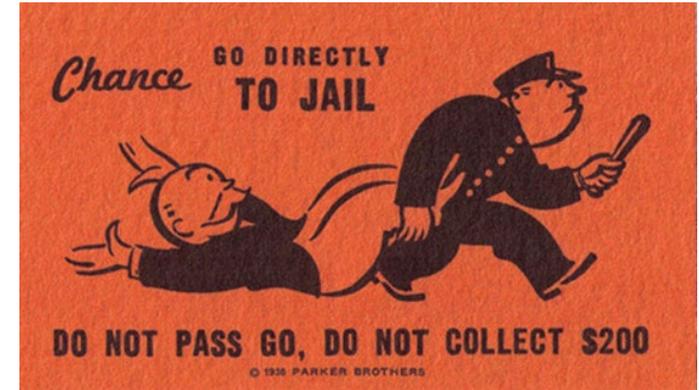
Things to Avoid

- "Similar to me"

- "Halo" effect

- Leniency/strictness

- Central tendency

Accessing Interview Items

- **Keep interview items and rating scales secure**
  - Do not provide to potential candidates
  - Keep printed materials in a secure location
  - Maintain digital files securely
  - Collect all materials at conclusion of each interview

Takeaways

- Standardize the interview process

- Ensure objectivity

- Professionalism

- Keep interview materials secure

Questions?

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