Cambria's Critical Behavior Interview and Fair Hiring Practice

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**Cambria's CBI™ technique helps organizations hire
the best people with minimum adverse impact.**

Introduction

Organizations seeking to hire the best talent available for key jobs face a critical question: how do you hire the most qualified and capable people while ensuring a process that does not discriminate on factors unrelated to the ability to perform the job in the best manner? A solid analysis of the requirements of the job, one that specifies the competencies needed for outstanding performance, is only half of the equation. The other half is the process by which job candidates are assessed on these requirements. The vast majority of hiring for professional and managerial jobs involves some type of interview. Unfortunately, the majority of selection interviews are unstructured, free-form, and often improvised events involving minimal or no preparation and in the absence of valid, well-defined criteria by which hiring decisions are made.

Research conducted over the past fifteen years come down solidly on the side of favoring one type of interview — *the structured interview* — as a proven method for finding out whether job candidates have

Cambria's Critical Behavior Interview (CBI™) method is reliable, valid

many of the required competencies that do not lend themselves readily to skill or ability testing. This paper provides an overview of the available research literature on the structured interview, specifically as it relates to adverse impact in selection. The findings support the validity, reliability, and positive legal outcomes for Cambria's interview method and emphasize the importance of the competency model to a selection process.

The Structured Interview

The structured interview has been widely found to be a valid, reliable, and legally sound selection tool. In fact, all nar-rative and meta-analytic reviews of the structured interview literature have supported the use of structured interviews (Campion, Palmer, and Campion, 1997). One well-respected study found that the structured behavioral interview yielded high inter-rater reliability (multi-interviewer agreement) and criterion-related validity (prediction of actual job performance), as well as convergent (with other measures) and discriminant validity (differentiation between constructs, or competencies) (Motowidlo et al., 1992).

More specific to the topic of adverse impact, the empirical literature has also supported the effectiveness of the structured interview in reducing, among others, race, gender, and age effects in selection interviews. A meta-analytic study on racial group differences in employee interview evaluations found that interviews as a whole do not adversely affect minorities nearly as much as mental ability tests (Huffcut & Roth, 1998). Their study further found that high-structure interviews have lower group differences than low-structure interviews.

In an interesting article by Williamson et al. (1997), the authors actually linked interview structure with litigation outcomes in 130 US court cases (both disparate-treatment and disparate-impact). Basing their hypotheses on the conceptual link between interview structure and reduced opportunities for differential treatment through standardization, reduced potential for bias through increased objectivity, and increased job relatedness, they indeed found an empirical link between interview structure and how judges explained their verdicts. The three general characteristics found to be significantly related to favorable verdicts for defendants, in order of significance, were (1) job related, (2) standardized administration, and (3) multiple interviewers.

The Critical Behavior Interview™

Cambria's Critical Behavior Interview™ (CBI), one of handful of interview types identified in the empirical literature as Situational Interviews, is a refinement of the structured interview, focusing as it does on investigating what interviewees have done in the past to handle situations similar to those encountered in the job for which they are applying. It is based on a simple but powerful premise: **past behavior predicts future behavior**, Besides behavior, the CBI™ is especially adept at uncovering factors such as decision-making, problem solving, and motivational factors such as drive, persistence, and results-orientation. In addition, the CBI™ is excellent at assessing interpersonal skills and judgments involving other people — aspects of emotional intelligence.

The origin of the situational interview has been traced back to Latham et al. (1980). Since then, it has been demonstrated to be a valid, reliable, and legal approach to employee hiring (Maurer, 1997). In fact, in a field study comparing the effects of race and age in conventional structured interviews to those in situational interviews, authors found stronger same-race effects with the former than with the latter (Lin et al., 1992). In either case, the same-race effect could be avoided by using mixed-race interview panels. Furthermore, a later study (Pulakos & Schmitt, 1995), comparing the validity of hypothetical-situation interviews to experience-base interviews, found that the CBI™-type interview, which focuses on candidates' actual past experiences, was a valid and powerful predictor of job performance, while the hypothetical-situation interview was not.

Elements of Structure Affecting Adverse Impact

The 1997 review by Campion, et. al. identified fifteen components of structure that enhance either the content of the interview or the evaluation process in the interview. The authors related these content and evaluation

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characteristics to several measures of reliability, validity, and user reactions. One of the user reactions identified was EEO bias (i.e., the tendency of the components of the interview to increase potential bias against subgroups of candidates protected by EEO laws). These biases include adverse impact, disparate treatment, and perceptions of fairness.

Eleven components were found to reduce EEO bias outcomes. For interview content, they were (1) the presence of a solid job analysis; (2) using consistent questioning across interviews; (3) limited prompting of candidates; (4) better (more specific and targeted) questions; and (5) controlling tangential interview questions and off-the-point candidate responses. For interview evaluation, they were: (6) the use of behaviorally anchored rating scales; (7) taking detailed notes; (8) using more than one interviewer; (9) limited or no discussion with candidates between interviews; (10) inter-viewer training; and (11) statistical (vs. subjective) determination of the decision to hire.

Let us focus our attention on **job analysis**, the first component on the list. According to Campion et al., a variety of job analysis methods can be used to develop structured interviews, but **critical incidents** are the most common (citing twelve studies to back up that assertion). This is their description of that method:

> Critical incidents provide ideas for interesting and job-related questions. However, the development of questions from incidents is part of the art (or unwritten aspects) of structured interviewing. "Literary license" is needed (Latham & Saari, 1984, p. 569). Incidents are often grouped into dimensions first

A solid job analysis, such as a competency model, is fundamental to reducing EEO bias.

(Motowidlo et al., 1992; Robertson et al., 1990), then incidents that best represent the dimensions are turned into questions (Latham et al., 1980), thus enhancing content validity (p. 659).

This should sound familiar to developers of competency models. In their discussion of the reliability, validity, and user reactions to job analyses (i.e., competency models), Campion et al. state that such analyses are a basic requirement for developing valid selection procedures according to both professional testing guidelines (Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 1987) and legal requirements (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Civil Service Commission, Department of Labor, & Department of Justice, 1978). The authors also state that a job analysis foundation for selection interviews enhances job-relatedness (and therefore "face validity" to interviewees), increases the amount of useful information gained from an interview, reduces contamina-tion by focusing on job-related content, and enhances one's ability to compare applicants critically during interview evaluations.

Conclusion

Cambria's CBI™ interview technique has strong support in the research literature. Structured interviewing has been repeatedly shown to be a reliable, valid, and legally sound selection tool, and the CBI™ has been identified as the method of choice, far surpassing the efficacy and legal defensibility of free-form interviews and many other selection tools. Furthermore, the findings lend support to the importance of the competency model to a sound selection system. All of this is evidence that Cambria's practices truly are best practices.

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