THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CULTURE IN STRUCTURED BEHAVIOURAL SELECTION INTERVIEWS

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ABSTRACT

Researchers frequently state that we still do not know much about the application of the selection interview across cultures when recruiting intercultural candidates. (Harris, 1989; Hough and Oswald, 2000; Stewart and Perlow, 2001; Macan, 2009). Yet the selection interview continues to be widely used by practitioners for interviewing a broad range of candidates of different cultural backgrounds (Lievens, Highhouse and de Corte, 2005; Topor, Colarelli and Han, 2007). This thesis identifies gaps in the literature on (a) what constitutes appropriate selection procedures in cases where interviewers and candidates are from different cultures, and (b) what the appropriate guidelines are for achieving successful communication between interviewers and candidates in intercultural selection interviews.

A new conceptual model, informed by the attribution theory (Knouse, 1989), is developed in this study, with the purpose of identifying the factors influencing the way interviewers and candidates perform during intercultural selection interviews. In the course of developing this model, the study calls into question the suitability of the structured behavioural selection interview as a means of recruiting intercultural candidates. The thesis focuses on Chinese candidates being interviewed by non-Chinese interviewers for entry-level positions in an Australian financial services organisation based in Sydney, Australia.

An important factor motivating this research is the skill shortage that currently exists in Australia, and the ironical situation that, despite this shortage, the available skills of a diverse ethnic migrant workforce are being underutilised. The study investigates the

issue of whether the culture of the ethnic migrant has an impact on the recruitment process and on interview outcomes, and whether the structured selection interview technique is a reliable and valid tool for interviewing intercultural candidates.

This thesis is distinctive in a number of ways. A general inductive approach along with a method of thematic analysis, assisted by NVivo, is used to develop a holistic framework laying out the various themes influencing an interview. The study attempts to capture the factors influencing intercultural interviews and to evaluate their relative prevalence. Live structured behavioural selection interviews recorded on audiotape were scrutinised and analysed, and interviews were conducted with interviewers and candidates to capture information and data of a kind which might have been lost in a quantitative approach. A total of 11 live interviews, 11 candidate debriefs and 13 interviewer debriefs were recorded. This produced rich data for qualitative analysis, totalling 546 single-spaced pages and 230,109 words. Findings from these three data sources were triangulated to support the findings of the study, which were also informed by previous research.

The data analysis reveals that there are 37 factors influencing the selection interviews. These factors are categorised into nine themes: communication, professional assets, KSA (knowledge, skill and ability), interview readiness, personality, culture, the interviewing factors, situational and demographics. Communication is a critical theme determining perceptions of candidates' person-job fit (through KSA evaluation), person-organisation fit (through personality evaluation), and person-career fit (through professional assets evaluation). Culture is found to influence the themes of communication, KSA, professional assets, the interviewing theme, personality and interview readiness.

The analysis concludes that non-Chinese interviewers often radically underestimate, or even totally overlook, the impact of culture in the structured selection process, because they are focused on job fit and organisation fit. The Chinese candidates, on the other hand, are much more aware of the influence which culture in its various forms has upon interviews, often showing a clear perception of the differences between their own interview expectations and those of the interviewers. Another key research finding of this study is the prevalence of the phenomenon of attribution in interviews, something which has not been studied before. The pervasive influence of culture in the selection interview is therefore evident in two ways. First, there is a tendency for Chinese candidates to attribute more perceptions to external factors than to internal factors. Second, the actual causes of positive and negative perceptions of non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates differ.

The intention of the thesis is that the research findings will make a significant scholarly contribution towards the development of intercultural selection theories aimed at a better understanding of the various factors impacting on the intercultural selection process, while also having beneficial practical implications for the search for effective selection procedures. The findings seem to indicate that in the case of intercultural interviews, the structured behavioural selection interview may not be as robust as many researchers claim; further research is warranted to examine the intercultural validity of the structured behavioural selection interview. The outcome of this research is highly relevant to current business practice, as businesses increasingly recognise the need for effective selection procedures. The framework presented may benefit the interview process for minority groups elsewhere such as between non-Hispanic interviewers and Hispanic candidates in the United States. It is also relevant to future academic research,

highlighting the need for a better understanding of the various factors impacting on the intercultural selection process if the purposes of theory development are to be adequately served.

STATEMENT OF CANDIDATE

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled "**The mediating role of culture in structured behavioural selection interviews**" has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number: HE22FEB2008-D05626 on 14 March 2008.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFSO: Australian financial services organisation

C01:   Researcher interview debrief with candidate number 1, and similarly for
          C02 to C11

CB: Competitor of AFSO

CQ: Cultural intelligence

CSR: Customer service representative

BDI: Behavioural description interview

EQ: Emotional intelligence

FAQ: Frequently asked question

GFC: Global financial crisis

HR: Human resource

HRC: Human resource consultant

HRE: Human resource executive

MA: Researcher interview debrief with interviewer A, and similarly for MB to
          MM

P-E: Person-environment fit

P-G: Person-group fit

P-J: Person-job fit

P-O: Person-organisation fit

P-P: Person-person fit

P-V: Person-vocation fit

RC: Recruitment consultant

S01:   Live selection interview number 1, and similarly for S02 to S11

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. INTRODUCTION

It is difficult to say whether research has encouraged more use of the selection interview, or whether the use of the selection interview has encouraged more research on it. What is certain is that the popularity of the selection interview persists in industry (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002; Lievens, Highhouse and de Corte, 2005; Topor, Colarelli and Han, 2007) and that its challenges continue to be a subject of much interest to researchers. Over the years, attitudes toward the selection interview as an employment tool have changed from scepticism to appreciation (Jelf, 1999; Judge, Higgins and Cable, 2000; Macan, 2009). Where research may have contributed to this change is in the improvements that researchers have made to the validity of the selection interview as a selection tool. Effective techniques have been developed and utilised, leading to an increased ability to make good employment decisions. Psychometric evidence attests to these continuing improvements (Judge, Higgins and Cable, 2000). One such technique, the structured behavioural interview, even claims to be more predictive of job performance than cognitive testing (Jelf, 1999). Very likely, research will continue to improve on the selection interview, resulting in the continuing prevalence of its use among practitioners. Researchers and practitioners will continue to encourage one another in their respective pursuits of improving and using it. However, in the case of intercultural selection interviews – interviews where the interviewer and candidate are from different cultures – differences in the perception and interpretation of verbal and nonverbal communication pose significant challenges to the interviewer and candidate by virtue of their being from different backgrounds (Gumperz, 1978; Lai and Wong, 2000; Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford, 2006). In particular, these intercultural encounters frequently lead to negative perceptions and

refusals (Otlowski, 2008). This thesis explores the communication process of selection interviews between non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates, and explores the influence of culture on interview outcomes.

1.1. Background to the research

Globalisation greatly contributes to the competition for human resources, which can now come from anywhere in the world. Because the developed economies of the world, particularly those of the western world, are faced with ageing populations and therefore declining workforces, recruiting across national boundaries has become even more prevalent. Recruiting across cultures poses a challenge specifically when using selection interviews as a mode for selecting the right candidates, because of the influence of culture in the selection interview process (Lai and Wong, 2000), and this has repercussions for the effectiveness and equity of the interview as a selection tool.

1.1.1. Fit selection theory and culture

The problem of culture in communication and its associated consequences have long been known. Differing cultural patterns of communication can lead to miscommunication in the selection interview (Ajirotutu, 1989). A shared cultural background is necessary if candidates are to correctly interpret any indirect questions from the interviewer (Lai and Wong, 2000). The significant role of culture and its impact on selection interviews is real (O'Grady and Millen, 1994; Gumperz, 1978) because culture is communication (Hall, 1969) and communication is culture (Ronen, 1984; Goodman and Monaghan, 2007). Effective intercultural interviewing must include an appreciation of the nuances of culture in communication and their impact on

2

performance in the selection interview. Cultural and social factors can significantly influence interview processes and outcomes (Schmitt, 1976; Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002). What are less understood are the specific cultural challenges encountered by the interviewer and candidate (Roberts and Campbell, 2006) in the interpersonal interaction process involved in a selection interview (Gumperz, 1978; O'Grady and Millen, 1994). Cultural differences influence who will succeed and who will not (Lai and Wong, 2000; Wong and Lai, 2000).

Because the selection interview is a social interaction between the interviewer and candidate, social factors necessarily impact on the actions and behaviour of both the parties (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002). In an intercultural selection interview, the interviewer and candidate bring their respective social communicative conventions to the meeting, and these are laden with culturally driven differences (Miller-Retwaiut, 1994). These differences embedded in their respective social worlds are among the social factors that have ramifications for the actions and behaviour of both the interviewer and candidate, influencing the selection interview process and outcome (Buzzanell, 1999; Buzzanell, 2002). It is therefore important to understand the 'what' and 'how' of socio-cultural influences in the intercultural selection interview.

As processes and outcomes are affected, so too will be the validity of the selection interview as a selection tool (Hough and Oswald, 2000). This validity is further challenged when the interviewer and candidate have differing, culturally loaded interviewing expectations (Mizunuma, 2002). It is therefore important not just to understand how culture influences the processes and outcomes of the selection interview but also how differing cultural expectations can contribute to potential

biases in selection decisions. These culturally determined biases have the potential to affect the validity of the selection interview.

Some literature suggests that the selection interview also functions as a tool in social selection (Chatman, 1991; Adams and Elacqua, 1994; Adams, 1999). Such a selection process seeks to ensure that there is an adequate fit between the candidate and the environment (Chuang and Sackett, 2005). Fit theory suggests that interviewers make hiring decisions based on the assessed fit between the candidate and the environment (P-E) (Parsons, Cable and Liden, 1999), where the latter is made up of multiple systems (Kristof-Brown, Jansen and Colbert, 2002). The components in this fit are person-job (P-J), person-vocation (P-V), person-person (P-P), person-group (P-G), and person-organisation (P-O) (Morley, 2007). P-J refers to the compatibility of the characteristics of the candidate and the job (Carless, 2005; Sekiguchi, 2007). P-V is concerned with the suitability of the candidate's personality to the vocational environment (Kristof, 1996). P-P explores the compatibility between the candidate and supervisor (Van Vianen, 2000). P-G examines the degree of congruence between the candidate and the team (Kristof, 1996). P-O is interested in the compatibility between the candidate and the organisation as a whole (Sekiguchi, 2007). Among these components, P-J and P-O dominate the literature and are important as selection criteria (Chuang and Sackett, 2005; Sekiguchi, 2007).

Fit is enhanced when the values of the individual match those of the environment. Some such values, however, are driven by culture (Lai and Wong, 2000; Wong and Lai, 2000). In selecting values, organisations may in effect be selecting particular cultural groups. Two possible ramifications are (1) that suitable candidates may be overlooked because of their cultural backgrounds, and (2) that organisations will open

4

themselves to potential discriminatory practices. To address these ramifications, it is necessary to understand which social factors are in effect contributing to cultural selection.

Culture is real in selection interviews. It presents problems for the interviewer and candidate, and influences the selection interview process and outcome. This influence has implications for the robustness and validity of the selection interview as a selection tool. In some instances, a lack of understanding of the influence of culture on the process and outcome leads to charges of discrimination.

1.1.2. Issues of discrimination in employment

'Prejudice is a bias or prejudgement, favourable or unfavourable, that has no factual basis. Prejudice becomes discrimination when it translates into the unequal treatment of individuals who are the object of the prejudicial attitudes' (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001).

Discrimination happens when ethnic minority candidates are looking for work (Krysan and Lewis, 2005; Cotton and Gilbert, 2007; Patriquin, 2007; Booth, Leigh and Varganova, 2009). Blatant discrimination against foreign names on resumes is well-known (Patriquin, 2007; Booth, Leigh and Varganova, 2009; Narushima 2009). In the selection interview literature, the persistence of inconsistent research conclusions suggests the subtlety of the influence of cultural differences in the selection interview (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000; Frazer and Wiersma, 2001; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006; Macan, 2009). These subtleties make it difficult to identify the factors and examine the processes that are contributing to the discrimination process.

Psychological theories have been proposed to explain the complexity associated with the influence of culture on the selection interview. The study of prejudices (Stewart and Perlow, 2001), stereotyping (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979; Singer and Eder, 1989), social desirability (Lewis and Sherman, 2003) and social identity (Lewis and Sherman, 2003) is contributing to our understanding of how discrimination takes place in the selection interview. Two other, rather contentious, suggestions have also been made to explain how discrimination happens in interviews. One concerns modern ethnicity bias (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006) and the other takes the form of schema theory (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001). Modern ethnicity bias is an implicit form of racism (McConahay, 1986) that occurs without the interviewer being aware of his or her own prejudices and results in an act of discrimination in the interview. Schema theory, on the other hand, explores how prejudices can be successfully suppressed during an interview to produce equitable outcomes and still discriminate against ethnic minorities in other ways. Psychological theories suggest that the process by which culture influences a selection interview is complex.

Perceived prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions in intercultural selection interviews can be costly. While the courts tend to favour interviews that use structure, panels and job-related questions, this is not sufficient to protect an interviewer from engaging in certain acts of communication that a candidate of another culture may consider offensive (Campion and Arvey, 1989; Williamson, et al., 1997; Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004). For example, questions about one's family background may be deemed an invasion of privacy by an Australian candidate but seen as a means

of establishing rapport by a Chinese candidate. Serious misperceptions of intent can be costly to interviewing organisations.

Recruitment and selection biases across gender, age and disabilities are perhaps better documented in the literature than cultural bias. When a foreign name on the resume can impact on the chances of a candidate being invited for an interview (Patriquin, 2007), and pre-interview impressions formed can impact on the interview outcome (Macan and Dipboye, 1990), we may expect that the interpersonal interaction experience of the selection interview is also susceptible to such biases. The discrimination literature supports the view that culture influences the selection interview in tangible ways (Arvey, 1979) – for example, there have been cases where interviewers' behaviour during selection interviews has been found to be legally discriminatory (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004). The influence of cultural bias in interviews is certainly an area worthy of research.

1.1.3. Problems in the structured interview

The structured behavioural interview is a technique advocated by researchers as an effective and non-discriminatory means of assessing the suitability of candidates for roles during the face-to-face job interview. There are different forms of the structured behavioural interview, the more popular ones being the situational interview and the behavioural description interview, often referred to simply as the 'BDI' (Huffcutt, et al., 2001). The behavioural answering technique, where candidates are expected to be specific in demonstrating a particular competency, is generic to the different forms of the structured behavioural interview.

Despite the strong psychometric properties of the structured interview, the use of structure is not as widespread as proponents of the structured interview would hope (Lievens and de Paepe, 2004; Chen, Tsai and Hu, 2008). Interviewers do not use structure when there is a felt need (1) to establish informal contact with candidates, (2) for discretion over interview questions, and (3) to interview more efficiently. Another reason why the structured interview is not as prevalent as might be hoped is because of the possible influence of culture on the structured interview. Ma and Allen (2009) suggest that candidates from high and low power distance cultures may react differently to being led by the interviewer during the structured interview. Interviewer perceptions of candidates from different cultures can therefore be moderated by structure. The structured interview may be susceptible to the influence of culture when used in different cultural settings. That the structured interview can be potentially discriminatory is seen in the context of disability discrimination (Miceli, Harvey and Buckley, 2001) and this possibly also contributes to the lack of use of the structured interview in intercultural settings.

1.2.   Rationale for the research

Theory development is the cornerstone of research in the quest for knowledge advancement. The need for theory development in the area of the employment interview, and particularly in the context of the intercultural selection interview in Australia, is spurred on by the unstoppable speed of globalisation and mobility of labour. For example, in the year from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011 the number of Subclass 457 primary visas granted to non-citizens to work in Australia increased by almost 40% when compared to the previous 12 months (Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011).

A review of the literature shows that theory development in the employment interview is being stifled by the focus of researchers on the structured interview (Buckley, Norris and Wiese, 2000).This lack of theory development has repercussions for developments in the intercultural selection interview when structured interview researchers using quantitative methodology continue to focus on the structured interview as a panacea for the problems of validity regarding the intercultural interview (Buckley, et al., 2007; McCarthy, Van Iddekinge and Campion, 2010). Such studies contribute to the stalling of the development of new knowledge and understanding regarding the selection interview across cultures (Macan, 2009).

An area of the selection interview that is under-researched is the intercultural selection interview where the interviewer and candidate are from different cultures (Molinsky, 2007; Macan, 2009). While the selection interview is an interpersonal communication between the interviewer and candidate (Connerley, 1997), the intercultural selection interview refers specifically to communication between an interviewer and candidate from different cultures. The need to explore intercultural communication within a single interaction event (Molinsky, 2007) such as the selection interview (Gumperz, 1978) has long been recognised. However, there remains a dearth of literature about the influence of culture in the selection interview.

Australian studies on intercultural employment interviews have focused on topics such as skill development (O'Grady and Millen, 1994), the structured interview (Orpen, 1985), and the influence of accent (Willemyns, Gallois, Callan and Pittam, 1997). Two researchers have attempted to develop a new understanding of the intercultural interview by taking a linguistic approach (Takata, 2003; Lipovsky, 2006). Lipovsky

examined French and English speaking candidates and the impact that different linguistic characteristics have on impression management. Takata explored Japanese speaking candidates in the Australian environment and the influence of their linguistic characteristics on communication competence.

Attribution theory is an attempt to understand how individuals interpret events (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p.23) that subsequently impact on their motivation and behaviour (Weiner, 1985). The theory explains whether behaviour is internally or externally motivated (Knouse, 1989). The role of attribution theory (Knouse, 1989) in the intercultural selection interview in the context of Chinese candidates being interviewed in Australia has not been studied. Attribution influences employment interviews (Knouse, 1989; Tay, Ang and Van Dyne, 2006) and attribution training can make a difference to the interview process and its outcomes (Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009). Research shows that gender differences in attribution exist in the context of employment interviews (Reid, Keliman and Travis, 1986). Gender diversity in attribution points to the possibility of cultural diversity in the same phenomenon. Intercultural selection interview outcomes may be influenced by whether candidates of a particular culture attribute their success or failure in the selection interview to internal or external causes. An example of an internal attribution is where a candidate assigns the cause of interview failure to a lack of ability. An example of an external attribution is where a candidate attributes the cause of failure to the interviewer being racist. The role of attribution theory in the context of intercultural selection interviews needs further exploring, particularly the role of attribution when interviewers make hiring decisions based on the assessed fit between the candidate and the environment (P-E) (Parsons, Cable and Liden, 1999).

Fit theory provides a platform for understanding the compatibility between an individual and the environment that the individual operates in (Sekiguchi, 2004). In the context of a selection interview, the person-job fit and the person-organisation fit have been widely researched. P-O fit is concerned with the compatibility of the individual and the organisation in terms of their characteristics and needs (Kristoff, 1996). P-J fit is concerned with the compatibility of the individual and the job in terms of the abilities of the individual to meet the skill demands of the job, and the attributes of the job to meet the desires of the individual (Edwards, 1991). To the extent that individuals fit the organisation and the job, the individuals will have a satisfying relationship with the organisation.

The interaction between P-O fit and P-J fit in employee selection may be influenced by culture. Sekiguchi (2004) gives the example of different hiring intentions of decision makers in the United States and Japan. In the United States, P-J fit takes priority over P-O fit; in Japan, the reverse happens. This contrast is the result of differences in values resulting from differences with regard to collectivism and individualism (Hofstede, 2001, Chapter 5) as well as time orientation (Hofstede, 2001, Chapter 7) between the two cultures. The relative importance attached to P-O and P-J fit by non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates in Australia has not been studied. Sekiguchi has suggested that other fits such as person-vocation fit and person-team fit are also an important influence on selection interviews. A qualitative study provides the opportunity to explore what else, apart from P-O and P-J fits, is significant in the evaluation of candidates for roles.

1.2.1. Environmental triggers for the research

Five environmental factors triggered this research on the influence of culture on intercultural selection interviews of Chinese candidates by non-Chinese interviewers in Australia.

First, the globalisation of today's business environment is causing many organisations, including Australian businesses, to compete globally for the best talent and skills, in order that their operations may remain competitive and commercially viable. This means that there is strong competition for the talent and skills of people from very diverse backgrounds. At the same time, globalisation has also resulted in real opportunities for businesses to adopt a global approach to their employment policies. Organisations can now recruit and employ people with the best talent and skills from anywhere in the world regardless of places of origin. The ability to globally compete and access the best talent will dictate the ability of many businesses, including Australian businesses, to survive in an economic environment that is highly competitive, and comprised of an increasingly smart workforce and ever savvier customers.

Second, the competition to recruit internationally across racial, ethnic and cultural boundaries is made more intense by the 'war for talent' occurring in more developed countries with their ageing populations (Axelrod, Handfield-Jones and Welsh, 2001). Examples are Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In these countries, selective criteria on immigration eligibility and an increase in migrant intake has widened the talent and skill base available to employers, and is an effective way of addressing the problems associated with shrinking workforces due to ageing.

Ageing populations have created the need to recruit workers from very diverse backgrounds for local operations.

Third, when companies adopt a global strategy in their employment policies, they create a culturally diverse workforce that has real value for business. Cultural diversity brings tangible benefits to the workplace by providing alternate and wider perspectives to workplace situations and problems. These added perspectives can lead to more and better-quality information being available to managers for use in their business decisions. In this way, cultural diversity makes a positive contribution to the workplace, and impacts on the bottom-line. Taking advantage of a culturally diverse workforce can ensure that organisations have a better chance of surviving locally and internationally.

Fourth, the abolition on the 26 March 1973 of the White Australia policy that discriminated against non-White migrants was a watershed moment in the history of Australian migration. Although Australia continues to receive large numbers of migrants from the English-speaking world, a new trend has emerged in recent years. Increasing numbers of Asian migrants are arriving on our shores. Many of these migrants are young, attend university, and are hoping to eventually apply to live and work in Australia. The process of applying for work in Australia typically involves several tasks, chief among which is the selection interview. As Australia becomes increasingly diverse, we can expect that the intercultural selection interview will become commonplace.

Fifth, globalisation is impacting on the demographics landscapes of the major cities of Australia, especially Sydney, which is the preferred place of residence for many

Chinese migrants. It is thus becoming increasingly obvious that Australian businesses must recruit and employ staff from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. The next few sections present some observations on present-day multicultural Australia and the Australian employment market, focusing in particular on the Chinese in Australia.

1.3.   The Australian multicultural landscape

Australia is one of the most multicultural countries in the world, with the United Kingdom, New Zealand and China being the top three countries of origin of its migrants (Griffiths, 2010). Australia is now home to people of more than 200 different ancestries with 44% of the population coming from overseas, or having at least one parent from overseas. At the same time that the overseas-born are on the rise, there is also an increase in the diversity of the source countries from which migrants are arriving. Now, for the first time, six of the 10 most common source countries of migrants are Asian, with the most migrants arriving from China and India. Additionally, while 73% of the population is Australian-born, half of these new Australians are not of Australian ancestry. In other words, many Australian-born members of the population are themselves from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

A significant development in the history of Australian migration is that for the first time the intake of Chinese migrants now outnumbers all other migrant groups, including those from the United Kingdom and New Zealand (Martin, 2009). In the space of 20 years, the number of Chinese born Australians has increased six-fold (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009, p.14). An interesting trend among Chinese migrants, particularly those from China and Hong Kong, is that half of them are settling in Sydney (Ho, 2008). This makes a study of Chinese candidates in Sydney an

area of practical research that is of direct relevance to the Australian employment marketplace.

1.3.1. Australia's labour shortage

Skilled migrants make up a significant proportion of new arrivals to Australia. In 2008, it was reported that skilled migration accounted for 70% of the country's migration intake (Kelly, 2008), and in 2010, 62% of new arrivals to Australia were skilled migrants (Griffiths, 2010). Australia's focus on skilled migration is driven by the twin problems of (1) an expectation of an ageing workforce due to an ageing population, and (2) an anticipated growth in employment. Over the 20-year period between 1986 and 2006, the combination of increased workforce participation, declining unemployment and a growth in population saw employment grow by 40%, but the population growth was just 28%. Present day Australian immigration intake is driven by the country's need for skilled workers to fill its workforce shortage.

From 1983 through to the present day, succeeding Australian Prime Ministers from Bob Hawke and Paul Keating to Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard have instituted migration policies to address the twin problems of an ageing workforce and employment growth. The Subclass 457 visa came into effect in 1996. This is a temporary visa that allows skilled migrants to remain in the country only for as long as their skills are required. For the year ending June 2011, there was a significant increase of nearly 40% in the number of Subclass 457 primary visa applications lodged, compared to the previous year (Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2011). The condition for permanent settlement became highly focused on matching the skills of migrants with those that were in demand in

the country. Despite the continuing world uncertainty created by the 2009 global financial crisis, these migration trends in Australia are likely to continue.

1.3.2. Unequal employment rates in Australia and overseas

In recent years, the media in Australia and overseas, for example the *Sydney Morning Herald* in Australia (Martin, 2009) and Maclean's in Canada (Patriquin, 2007), have published research that highlights the difficulties migrant candidates are experiencing in the job market. Not surprisingly, many migrants struggle to find employment that is commensurate with their abilities (Coates and Carr, 2005; Daly, Barker and McCarthy, 2005). In 2006 in Australia, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that many new migrants experience difficulties in getting work in their early years of living in Australia. While the unemployment rates of new and longer-standing migrants stood at 11.8% and 5.3% respectively, the national unemployment rate stood at 5.25%. In 2010, unemployment among skilled migrants, including their families, stood at 30% higher than for the general population (Bibby, 2010).

These disproportionate rates of unemployment between the general population and new migrants are consistent with many Western and European countries in the 1990's (Vrij, Dragt and Koppelaar, 1992). New migrants face particular employment challenges when they first arrive in a new country. Socio-psychological and cultural challenges are present throughout the entire employment process and create difficulties for the interviewer and candidate. Unequal employment opportunities experienced by newer migrants are made worse by the problem of discrimination. Together, the influence of culture and discrimination practices contributes to the gap

in unemployment rates between new migrants, established migrants, and the general population.

1.4.   Responding to the underutilisation of a diverse workforce

The above analysis of the Australian demographics and employment environments suggests that the Australian economy is not getting the full benefit of its skilled migration program. The aim of the skilled migration program is to enable Australia to fill a gap in its labour force that is caused by labour shortage. The gap in employment rates between new migrants and the rest of the population suggests that migrants are underemployed and that the Australian economy is therefore not reaping the full benefits of its skilled migration program.

One cause of the difficulties migrants are facing in their efforts to find work could be the selection interview process. There is a range of interviewer and candidate factors influencing intercultural selection interviews. Identifying this range of factors should be the first step in addressing this problem of the unequal employment opportunities. Following the identification of the factors influencing the selection interview, those that may be cultural can then be examined. Eventually, an examination of the influence of culture should allow for the development of effective techniques to help the interviewer and candidate to develop cultural competence in the intercultural selection interview. Intercultural competence at selection interviewing will reduce the difficulties that migrants are facing in looking for work, and help Australia to realise the hoped-for benefits of its skilled migration program.

1.4.1. Developing cultural competence in intercultural selection interviews

In the researcher's experience, some interviewers are aware of cultural differences in general, but when it comes to the selection interview, there is a tendency to succumb to insensitive and sometimes discriminatory practices by treating everyone just the same under the label 'Equity Issues'. Treating everyone the same raises the question of whether this is the same as treating everyone fairly, but more importantly, it suggests a lack of cultural competency on the part of the interviewer. On the other hand, some candidates are also broadly aware of the presence of cultural differences in the selection interview, but are also ignorant about the right things to do in an interview. The problem of culture is compounded when the candidate simply does not appreciate the need to learn the social language of the host country (Gilmore, 2009), and is unfamiliar with the new culture, its social practices and its employment market.

As the candidate pool becomes more multicultural, knowledge of culture is increasingly important (Bye, et al., 2011), where developing cultural competence is the domain of both the interviewer and candidate. It is imperative that interviewers acquire the know-how to develop the competitive edge offered by a diverse workforce, by seeing beyond cultural veils and accurately assessing candidates and recognise the right talents and skills for jobs. Interviewers also need to take care to behave in non-discriminatory ways so as to prevent charges of discrimination being brought against them, and to protect the reputation of the employing organisation as a fair employer. While interviewers need to skill themselves in effective intercultural interviewing, candidates also need to take some responsibility for fair outcomes by ensuring that they are equipped to deal with the challenges of coming to a new country. This includes developing a sufficient degree of language competence for

their level of expertise, and acquiring the knowledge and skills regarding how to look for work, and what the application and interviewing processes involve. The responsibility includes learning the skills of culturally effective job interviewing. Effective intercultural selection interviewing is a core competence of both the interviewer and candidate.

1.5. Definitions and terminologies

To develop a framework of cultural competence in the intercultural selection interview, there is clearly a need to research, explore and understand the phenomenon of the intercultural selection interview. Such a study must begin with a set of research questions that are linked to larger theoretical concepts that can only come from a literature review (Rocco, 2009).

The literature review for this study involves the three disciplines including communication, culture and the selection interview. However, the literature of these three disciplines is peppered with terminologies that can be confusing and cause difficulties with the task of identifying research gaps in the literature. For example, the employment interview is often used interchangeably with the selection interview, and yet they are not necessarily identical in all cases. This potentially presents the literature reviewer with two problems. First, it can be difficult to compare the findings of the various studies in the literature when the foci of the studies are not necessarily the same. This leads to the second problem, namely, identifying what research has been done and where the research gaps are. This section reviews the terminologies commonly seen in the literature, highlights the problems caused by inconsistent ways in which some of the terminologies have been used, and suggests ways for future

researchers to clearly define their studies based on the terminologies used. The section finishes with an alphabetical listing of the various terms, for ease of reference.

The terms 'employment interview', 'interviewer' and 'interviewee' are generic and all-encompassing. They include all the different types of interviews and the various parties to the interview. 'The employment interview' includes the recruitment interview, selection interview, promotion interview and placement interview. 'The interviewer' includes the recruiter, employing line manager, human resource and management personnel, evaluator/rater and placement interviewer. 'The interviewee' includes the applicant, candidate and the unemployed.

One of the confusions arising from the varying uses of these terminologies in the literature is that reviewers from the 1940's through to the 1960's did not make the distinction between the employment interview and the selection interview (Wagner, 1949; Mayfield, 1964; Ulrich and Trumbo, 1965; Wright, 1969). The employment interview is distinct from the selection interview. 'The employment interview' defines a wide area that is the subject of the entire range of literature, including studies on face-to-face interviews, resume studies, research using real and make-believe materials, and interviews for the purposes of placement, recruitment and selection. Thus the selection interview involves only a subset of the employment interview literature. The purpose of a selection interview is to select existing employees for other positions in the organisation, or to select new employees from an external pool of candidates to join the organisation.

Although Mayfield (1964), Ulrich and Trumbo (1965), and Wright (1969) referred to their work as reviewing the selection interview, they were in fact reviewing the entire

spectrum of the employment interview literature. On the other hand, more recent reviewers have used this broad 'employment interview' term when they have in fact been reviewing a particular type of interview. For example, although the title of her article referred to 'the employment interview', Macan's (2009) review was in fact focused on the selection interview. It would have been helpful if she had avoided the generic term 'employment interview' and used the specific term 'selection interview' so as to clearly identify the focus of her review.

Interviewing for different purposes – for example, for recruitment rather than for selection – can produce different experiences for the interviewer and candidate. When the purpose of an interview in a particular study is unclear, these different experiences can be missed. In this situation, it would be helpful to consistently use 'applicant' in conjunction with recruitment, as seen in Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003); and 'candidate' in conjunction with selection, as seen in Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer (2008). In other words, interested individuals become applicants when they have expressed their interest by submitting their applications for employment opportunities. If chosen for a selection interview, applicants then become candidates.

Researchers have long been concerned with the use of artificial, make-believe materials for research. They question the generalisability of these research findings to the real world of work (Schmitt, 1976). While there are an increasing number of real interviews being used in research – for example, Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer (2008), and Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003) – many studies continue to use mock interviews, or they recruit role-play interviewers to work with real interview materials – for example, Lai and Wong (2000), Frazer and Wiersma (2001) and Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006). Findings from these studies need to be interpreted in their specific context.

One way of distinguishing between real and make-believe interviews is in the use of the terms 'interviewer', 'evaluator' and 'rater'. These are used in real interviews – for example, Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis (1996) – and in mock interviews – for example, Stewart, Dustin, Barrick and Darnold (2008) – and in 'paper people' studies – for example, Stewart and Perlow (2001). For consistency, it would be useful for future researchers to distinguish real and make-believe studies by using the term 'interviewer' for real interviews and 'evaluator/rater' for make-believe interviews.

Interviewer and candidate experiences may be very different when the interviewer is an agency recruiter and not someone who is a company representative. The failure to make this distinction is potentially an issue in research. Unfortunately the literature does not make a distinction between the external agency recruiter and the internal company recruiter. Sometimes it is also unclear as to whether a recruiter is an internal employee or an external consultant. For example, Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003) indicated that their interviewers are 'full-time college recruiters and employees who volunteered to serve as interviewers'. In this instance, it is difficult to tell if the full-time college recruiters are in fact also employees of the organisation. More studies are based on internal company recruiters – for example, Lin, Dobbins and Farh (1992), Motowidlo, et al. (1992) - and fewer are based on external agency recruiters – for example, Takata (2003). It would be helpful if studies could be easily distinguished in this regard. One way of achieving this would be to reserve the term 'recruiter' solely to refer to external agency recruiters and reserve the term 'interviewer' solely for personnel from the employing organisation.

The difference between a placement interview and other types of interview, such as recruitment and selection interviews, is also important. Interviewers who are motivated to place every candidate into jobs versus those who are motivated to select the best candidate for the job are likely to have different expectations of the interview and to behave differently. The first intercultural employment interview research was conducted in a placement agency in the United States (Blau, 1963). Not surprisingly, the study found that the interviewer who is motivated to place everyone into jobs did not discriminate between the different racial groups of job seekers. The use of the term 'employment interview' is therefore not helpful when findings from such studies are generalised to other types of interviews. In employment studies such as this, it is better to use the specific term 'placement interview' to distinguish these interviews from other interview types.

In summary, using broad generic terms poses some problems for researchers. Clarifying and consistently using each employment term in a specific way can help in categorising the various types of employment interview study in the literature, guide the interpretation of various studies in their specific contexts, and assist in more meaningful comparisons of findings between different types of employment interview studies.

1.5.1. Terms in the literature

In alphabetical order, the following is a list of the various employment terminologies frequently encountered in the literature. Each terminology is briefly described, and they are organised into the three groups of 'culture, ethnicity and race', 'interviewing' and 'psychometrics'. The focus of this research on the 'intercultural selection interview' is

defined at the end of this section, followed by an explanation of what constitutes a successful selection interview.

CULTURE, ETHNICITY AND RACE TERMINOLOGIES

Culture. This is a complex and broad social phenomenon that gives groups of individuals their distinctive characteristics. Definitions of culture include: a patterned way of thinking, feeling, acting and reacting (Earley, Ang and Tan, 2006, p.20); beliefs, values and rules that are meaningful (Triandis, 1972); a transmitted pattern of meanings embedded in symbols that influences attitudes (Geertz, 1975, p.17); and, the 'mental programming of the mind' (Hofstede, 2001, p.2). In sum, culture can be referred to as the cognition of a particular group of people who have the same beliefs, values and rules of behaviour, where these influence each of the group members' thinking, feeling and action. House, Wright and Aditya (1997) suggested that culture can be grouped into experiential and normative. Experiential culture is the result of the members' shared experiences, such as having a common history, place of origin and ethnicity. Normative culture includes the members' shared psychological properties, such as having common values, assumptions and interpretations of events.

Individuals of a particular cultural group acquire their culture through the process of socialisation at home, in the school, at work, and through the wider community. This means that culture is learnt and expressed through its various forms of communication (Hall, 1959). It is shared among members in an imperfect way (Earley, Ang and Tan, 2006, p.20) and controls behaviour in a persistent fashion (Hall, 1959). Like ethnicity, culture is a social phenomenon that defines the identity of a group and distinguishes it from other groups. However, unlike ethnicity, which refers to those attributes that

24

distinguish groups within and between races, culture is broader and can include groups that are not racially based. Examples of these are the professional and industry groups. Culture is more complex than either race or ethnicity.

Ethnicity. Like culture, this is a social phenomenon that explains the differences among groups of people. Ethnicity however is a more specific term than culture. While culture describes the social characteristics of a particular grouping of people – for example, industry culture, professional culture and national culture – ethnicity describes the social characteristics of a particular racial group. Stanfield II (1994) elaborates that ethnicity is an attribute of race that explains the diversity within and between races. Members of the same race can therefore be made up of several ethnic groups. The Australian Bureau of Statistics supports and expands on this by stating that people of the same ethnicity have a shared identity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007). They are similar in one or more of the following ways: a shared history, cultural tradition, ancestry, geographic origin, language or other attribute that contributes to diversity. This suggests that ethnicity is a social phenomenon (Stanfield II., 1994) and, as such, is preferable to race (a biological attribute) in being an indicator of a person's culture.

Race. This is a biological reference term that is rooted in the phenotypes of people (Stanfield II., 1994). It is a category reference to a group, or individuals in a group, with qualities, including the physical, that are related to the phenotypical attributes of that race. Therefore, race is often manifested in the physical characteristics of people. Support for using physical characteristics to identify the different racial groups can be seen in the example of Malaysia. In this country, the three main racial groups are the Malays, Indians and Chinese, who are all easily identified by their physical

characteristics. Biologically linked physical characteristics are attributes of a race. In the employment interview literature, studies between Blacks and Whites were common in the early years – for example, Blau (1963) and Ledvinka (1971, 1972, 1973). Race can be a useful indicator of the culture of a person, but it is sometimes inadequate for explaining the cultural diversity that exists within and between races. For example, Lin, Dobbins and Farh (1992) state that race is used to distinguish Blacks, Whites and Hispanics in their study, but they acknowledged that the difference between the 'White Hispanic' and the 'White Caucasian' in their sample is not simply based on race but on ethnicity. Race may act as the physical cue of ethnicity (Kibria, 2000), but there seems to be a limit as to when race can be used to indicate a person's culture. Increasingly, ethnicity is the preferred way to distinguish the cultural groups of participants in the employment interview literature, as seen in Singer and Eder (1989); Vrij, Dragt and Koppelaar (1992); Roberts and Campbell (2006); and Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006)..

INTERVIEWING TERMINOLOGIES

Behavioural description interview. First described by Janz (1982) and simply referred to as the behavioural interview, this interviewing technique is based on the premise that the candidate's past behaviour is the best predictor of future training and job performance success (Janz, 1989; Huffcutt, et al., 2001). Many studies have proved the reliability and validity of the behavioural interview for job selection in this regard. Examples are seen in Motowidlo, et al. (1992), and Huffcutt, et al. (2001). Sometimes the behavioural interview is also referred to as the experience-based interview (Pulakos and Schmitt, 1995), the 'BD', i.e. patterned behavioural description (Janz, 1982; Orpen,

1985), or the 'BDI', i.e. behavioural description interview (Harris, 1989), as it is most commonly known among practitioners.

Conventional structured interview. Also referred to as the 'CSI', this is a form of structured interviewing that is less popular than behavioural and situational interviews. Unlike questions in a situational interview, which are based on the critical incidents technique, CSI questions are based on job analysis (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992). Lin, Dobbins and Farh (1992) found in their study that same-race effects on the interview outcome are greater with the CSI than with the situational interview, and concluded that the CSI is less valid than the situational interview for job selection.

Employment interview. A catch-all term that includes interviews for one or more of the purposes of recruitment and selection. Occasionally, these interviews are also used to help make promotion decisions (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008), for public relations (Campion, Palmer and Campion, 1997) and for placements (Blau, 1963). The literature on the employment interview spans the entire interview life-cycle process of development, conduct and evaluation (Dipboye, Wooten and Halverson, 2004, p.300). Reviewers tend to use this generic term when reviewing the employment interview literature, and this includes those studies based on audio and video materials, interview data items, face-to-face meetings and resumes. These studies are based on real and make-believe materials.

Employment/placement interviewer. Unlike a recruitment agency, an employment agency is typically a government-funded agency that employs employment consultants to assist the unemployed in getting work. In this regard, Takata (2003) has misused the term 'employment agency' in a context where the study involved a recruitment agency.

Employment consultants work in the interest of candidates rather than the employing organisation and are motivated to place everyone into jobs (Sattler, 1970). The interviews conducted by employment consultants therefore tend to be more of an information-gathering exercise than a selective one.

Hiring. This term is used in two ways in the literature. First, it refers to the employing of prospective staff that are presently external to the organisation – i.e., they are presently not employees of the organisation. This is in contrast to selecting staff from among a group of internal candidates – i.e., ones who are already employees working elsewhere in the organisation. While selection may consider both internal and external candidates, hiring refers to bringing staff into an organisation. Second, the term is used in make-believe studies in the context of interviewers' recommendations as to whether candidates are suitable for roles. Hence, the terms 'hiring recommendation' and 'hiring decision' are frequently seen in these make-believe studies. Examples are Lewis and Sherman (2003); Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006); Stewart, Dustin, Barrick and Darnold (2008).

Interviewee, applicant and candidate. These terms are used interchangeably and refer to an individual who is interested in an employment opportunity and who subsequently becomes a party to the employment process for that opportunity. Like the term 'employment interview', 'interviewee' is a catch-all term that includes 'applicant' and 'candidate'. The literature does not appear to use the terms 'applicant' and 'candidate' in a consistent manner, and sometimes they are used interchangeably within the same study, such as in Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), Lai and Wong (2000), Goldberg (2003), Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003), and Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006). Employment interview reviewers often use 'interviewee' as an

all-encompassing term. However, they also occasionally use 'applicant' and 'candidate' interchangeably, such as in Judge, Higgins and Cable (2000), Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion (2002), and Macan (2009).

Interviewer and evaluator/rater. Such a person is a party to the employment interview who is responsible for the recruitment, assessment, evaluation, selection and placement of interviewees into job roles. The literature uses these terms to refer to those involved in the conduct and evaluation of the interview. 'Interviewer' is another catch-all term where an interviewer may be a recruiter, a member of human resource and management personnel (Goldberg, 2003), a placement consultant (Blau, 1963) or an evaluator/rater (Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996).

Recruiter/recruitment consultant/recruitment interviewer. In the Australian human resource consulting experience of the researcher, many large businesses either have their own internal recruitment centres – for example the major banks and large resources companies – and/or they engage recruitment agencies to undertake the task of recruiting candidates for job vacancies. Recruiters are also often used to help in the selection task; however a crucial difference here is that recruiters do not make the final employment decision. This is the right and responsibility of the employing organisation. The exception to this is when a role is of a casual, temporary or contractual nature. In this case, the task of making employment decisions is occasionally delegated to the recruiter.

Recruitment and recruitment interview. Recruitment is the raising of interest among a target group of individuals about a particular job opportunity and motivating members of this group to submit their applications (Carless, 2007). The aim of recruitment

therefore is to attract as many applicants as possible (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002). When an employment interview is used for this purpose, it is called a recruitment interview, for example, Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003).

Selection and selection interview. An interview is a selection procedure based on a candidate's oral responses to an interviewer's oral inquiries for the purpose of predicting the future job performance of the candidate (McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt and Maurer, 1994). Selection is the judging, assessing, evaluating, screening and decision-making regarding the most suitable candidate for a role (Carless, 2007). While the aim of recruitment is to enlarge the pool of potential candidates, the aim of selection is to decrease the pool of candidates (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002). Selection is done by identifying the varying degrees of suitability of the candidates for the role (Bevan and Jackson, 1992). When an employment interview is used for this purpose, it is called a selection interview, for example, Singer and Eder (1989). Most employment interview studies, especially those conducted in recent years, are selection interview studies, for example, Robert and Campbell (2006), Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006), and Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer (2008).

Selection interviewer. This person is usually the employing line manager of the organisation. Sometimes the recruiter is also involved in the assessment and evaluation of candidates for the purpose of selection. The task of the selection interviewer is to discriminate among a pool of potential candidates (Bevan and Jackson, 1992) and to make a decision as to the most suitable candidate for a particular role.

Situational interview. First described by Latham, Saari, Pursell and Campion (1980), this particular form of the structured interview is focused on how candidates intend to

30

behave in particular hypothetical situations (Huffcutt, et al., 2001) in the future (Pulakos and Schmitt, 1995). This contrasts diametrically with the BDI where the candidates are asked about how they have behaved in the past. The evidence suggests that a situational interview is less predictive than a BDI for performing in higher-level positions (Huffcutt, et al., 2001). In addition, although the situational interview remains a valid selection tool, interview ratings of candidates in intercultural interviews using situational interviews show higher racial group differences (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998).

Structured interview. This form of interviewing is now generally accepted as a valid and reliable tool for the purpose of staff selection (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004; Macan, 2009). Campion, Palmer and Campion (1997) identified the contents and evaluation process of a valid and reliable structured interview as follows: (1) basing the interview questions on job analysis; (2) asking each candidate the same questions; (3) minimising the use of prompting, follow-up questioning and elaborating on questions; (4) using questions that ask for explanations or alternatives; (5) spending more time over an interview or asking more questions; (6) limiting the influence of ancillary information such as application forms and resumes; (7) disallowing candidates to ask questions until all the interviewer questions have been asked; (8) using multiple ratings for each answer; (9) applying rating scales that are behaviourally anchored; (10) taking detailed notes; (11) using multiple interviewers; (12) using the same interviewer/s for all the candidates; (13) avoiding discussing candidates and their answers until all the interviews have been conducted; (14) undertaking interviewing training; and (15) applying statistical predictions rather than relying on personal interviewer judgements. The three main types of structured interview found in the literature are the behavioural description interview, situational

interview and comprehensive structured interview, with the two most popular forms being the behavioural description interview and the situational interview.

PSYCHOMETRIC TERMINOLOGIES

Psychometric properties. These are the reliability and validity of research findings based on the use of statistical methods. Quantitative research in particular supposes that good research must produce findings that are statistically reliable and valid. A good employment interview will therefore meet the criteria of strong reliability and validity. Campion, Pursell and Brown (1988) is an example of a study that examined and supported the reliability and validity of using structure in the employment interview by using three-member interviewing panels to interview 243 White and Black applicants applying for entry-level production roles.

Reliability. In an employment interview, reliability refers to the consistency with which individual interviewers are able to produce comparable evaluations of the same candidate. For example, high inter-rater reliability was achieved in Campion, Pursell and Brown (1988). Buckley, et al. (2007) however revealed that there was low consistency in interviewer ratings of candidates because of the influence of race.

Validity. In the context of the employment interview, validity refers to the ability of the interview to predict outcomes. This predictive validity often compares interviewer evaluations with the candidate's performance on the job and in training, for example, Pulakos and Schmitt (1995), Carretta (2000). Pulakos and Schmitt found that the evaluations of interviewees by interviewers who used the experienced-based and situational structured interviews predict candidate performance better than cognitive

32

ability test. Carretta concluded that pilot selection decisions can better predict pilot training performance when the structured interview is used. It is interesting to note that an interview can be valid without being reliable (Janz, 1982; Orpen 1985).

1.5.2. The intercultural selection interview

The **intercultural selection interview** is for the purposes of this thesis defined by the following characteristics:

- All of the live selection interviews captured and analysed for this study are intercultural interviews between Chinese candidates and non-Chinese interviewers. This is in contrast to the intracultural interview where candidates and interviewers are of the same ethnic background.

- The Chinese candidates who participated in the research were born in Australia, Cambodia, China or Malaysia.

- The non-Chinese interviewers who took part in the study were born in Australia, Fiji, England, Lebanon or New Zealand.

- All the candidates were ethnically Chinese.

- The ethnicities of the interviewers were Caucasian Australian, Caucasian English, Indian Fijian, Lebanese, Caucasian New Zealander, and one European Australian with a grandparent who was half Chinese.

- Interviewers are either in the line management to whom the successful candidates will report, or are the second-in-charge officer of the employing department or branch, or the internal human resource consultant dedicated to the particular department or branch of AFSO.

- The candidates are external applicants who were not employed elsewhere in AFSO at the time of the interviews.

- The interview is either a one-to-one interview or a panel interview of two interviewers and a candidate. A panel interview refers to an event whereby two or more interviewers in a single interview are involved in talking with the candidate and in making the employment decision (Roth and Campion, 1992).

- Each candidate is being interviewed by the interviewer/s for a specific real job opportunity.

- All the positions being offered are for permanent employment.

- Some of the roles are permanent part-time and the others are permanent full-time.

- All the interviews in this research are face-to-face interviews.

1.5.3. Outcomes of structured interviews - successful selection interview

The employment interview can serve one or more purposes (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002). It can be used to select individuals for employment (example, Roberts and Campbell, 2006) or promotion (example, Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008), or recruitment (example, Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003), or for public relations (Campion, Palmer and Campion (1997) and placements (Blau, 1963). An overview of the literature indicates that the majority of studies on the employment interview are concerned with the employment interview as a selection method (Hough and Oswald, 2000; Macan, 2009). In particular, researchers are focusing on the validity of the structured interview in the context of its ability to predict job performance and training success (McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt and Maurer, 1994; Campion, Palmer and Campion, 1997; Moscoso, 2000; Salgado and Moscoso, 2002). A successful interview must be able to predict an employee's performance during training and on the job (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998).

In recent years, researchers have also become interested in the level of discrimination that may be happening in the employment interview process, for example, Roberts and Campbell (2006), Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006). This development is probably the result of two related factors. First, the market drives the need for researchers to find effective ways of using the interview to employ staff who will be productive in terms of performance and output (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998). Second, with the phenomena of globalisation and internationalisation in the marketplace, this need has extended to include developing the ability to interview potential candidates from a culturally diverse pool in a non-discriminatory way. This is important if employers are to be able to recognise real talent during the interview and not be blinded by cultural biases. At the same time, whether they intend to or not (Hunyor, 2003), employers also have to avoid the potential costs of legal actions based on discrimination being taken against them by disgruntled candidates (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004). A successful interview therefore must also be non-discriminatory.

A third consideration in interviewing success can be seen from the perspective of the candidate. At the present time of unprecedented shrinking of job markets and the demand for talent in the developed economies of the world, including Australia, the public relations function of the selection interview can be profoundly valuable to employers. There are several possible reasons for this. First, the interview is a two-way process where a candidate is also making employment decisions. The quality of an interview can influence a candidate's decision about employment choices (Liden and Parsons, 1986; Goldberg, 2003). Second, networking and word-of-mouth is an important method of employing staff, and candidates' experiences during an interview with a company can affect the reputation of the company as an employer of choice. A successful interview therefore should also take into consideration the nature of a

candidate's reactions to an interview.

In sum, a successful selection interview must meet the following criteria:

- It must be able to predict training and/or job performance

- It must be non-discriminatory

- It must be able to produce positive candidate reactions.

1.6. Interdisciplinary areas of the intercultural selection interview

Selection interview success is dependent on communication (Cissna and Carter, 1982; Kacmar and Hochwarter, 1995) which is necessarily an interdisciplinary area of study (Herbst, 2008). In intercultural communication, culture is central to promoting mutual understanding (Deresky, 2006, Chapter 3). A study of the successful intercultural selection interview therefore must involve the disciplines of communication, culture and the employment interview. The following sections provide an overview of the literature in these disciplines, to highlight the complexities and inter-relatedness of culture and communication, and their implications for the intercultural selection interview. More importantly, the overview reveals gaps in the intercultural selection interview literature.

1.6.1. Communication

Life exists and is meaningful because people interact with one another in social ways. Social interaction theory supports this view of the social nature of man being integral to his very existence, survival and character, hence giving human life meaning (Moerman, 2007). Social interaction requires interpretation because social interaction

relies on language and culture to create common meanings and shared frames of reference, thus resulting in the situations we encounter making sense (Charmaz, 2006, p.7). Through interaction, interpretation, language and culture, human beings are social beings where men and women live in a community of other men and women who interact with one another.

Language as a medium through which communication happens has been defined as '...an organised, generally agreed upon learned symbol-system used to represent the experiences within a geographic or cultural community' (Samovar, Porter and Jain, 1981). It represents the symbolic reality of the people in social interaction where messages are sent and received, meanings are created and interpreted, and actions and reactions are influenced and created (Krone, Jablin and Putnam, 1987; Knoblauch, 2001). In short, communication through language is the vehicle for social interaction.

Man's interaction through communication and the use of language is social and cultural. Examining the speech content of verbal communication can show us the words, phrases and structure of the language of a particular cultural group. More importantly, examining speech content can reveal the cultural and social characteristics of the group using that language in their interpersonal interactions with one another.

In the process of communication through language, however, interpretations of what is said can be a problem for the parties to the communication (Knoblauch, 2001). For communication to be effective, a certain amount of shared knowledge between the individuals of the group is necessary (Gunthner and Luckmann, 2001; Kameda, 2005). This shared knowledge is the culture of the people (Goodman and Monaghan, 2007).

Many researchers support the view that communication and culture are inseparable (Hall, 1959; di Lucio, Gunthner and Orletti, 2001, pp.174-207; Goodman and Monaghan and Goodman, 2007). Communication is infused with culture, so much so that for some researchers communication is culture, and for others culture is communication (Hall, 1959, 1969). Communication is shared cultural knowledge that is learned and practised.

1.6.2. Culture

Culture is the man-made part of the environment. The consequence of the acquisition of culture through the socialisation process of people interacting with one another (Linton, 1945) is that culture is a social, rather than a biological, inheritance. The creation, transmission and perpetuation of culture within a cultural community are inter-related. Through the socialisation process, culture is created, transmitted and perpetuated when members of the same culture learn to perceive and 'interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts and behaviours in the same or similar ways' (Banks and Banks, 2004, p.8). Common interpretations of meanings give rise to common values, attitudes and behavioural norms that become the history and culture of the community. The values, attitudes and behaviour embedded in common interpretations are, in essence, the man-made history of the group (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 1993, p.13).

Values are at the core of culture (Wolak, 2007). There is general agreement among developmental psychologists that children establish their value systems by the age of 10. Once established, these value systems are difficult to change because many of the values are unconsciously learnt and so are not open to discussion, nor can outsiders

directly observe them. 'They (values) can only be inferred from the way people act under various circumstances' (Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov, 2010).

Organisations, professional bodies, industry groups and countries all have cultures of their own. Groups that have common characteristics can form a larger cultural entity. For example, several national cultures can be grouped into a regional culture, as in the case of the cultures of Australia, England and the United States, which are commonly referred to as 'western culture'. Within each cultural group, there can be subcultures. For example, within the Australian national culture, subcultures made up of various ethnic groups exist, such as the Chinese. Many different types of cultures are in existence.

An important distinction is made between national culture and organisational culture (Hofstede, 1985). While membership of a nation is relatively permanent, membership of an organisation is normally for a limited period of time. A nation's unique values in terms of a culture-specific collective mindset are widely shared by members of the culture and are supported by a range of social institutions. These values and social institutions are not easily changed. Organisational cultures, on the other hand, are made up of practices rather than values and so are more temporary, because operational practices change (Mwaura, Sutton and Roberts, 1998). While there are different types of cultures, national culture stands apart because of its resilience. This resilience determines the success or failure of organisational initiatives such as total quality management (Galperin, 1999). Moreover, the resilience of national culture over organisational culture suggests that national culture influences organisational culture but not vice versa.

Organisational or corporate culture has been identified as an important aspect of organisational behaviour and as a concept that is useful in helping to understand how organisations function (Kristof, 1996). A person's culture helps determine how comfortably that person will fit into a corporate culture (O' Reilly, 1989). A good fit between the person and organisation is important (Rousseau and Parks, 1992). Rousseau and Parks (1992) and Ryan and Schmit (1996) indicate that the degree of fit between a person and an organisation is related to both productivity and employee turnover. The psychological contract between employer and employee extends to loyalty and commitment to the organisation and forms the basis of the person-organisation fit. Calori and Sarnin (1991) examined the relationships between organisation cultural traits and economic performance and between strength of corporate culture and economic performance in France and concluded that the economic performance of an organisation is directly tied to the strength of the corporate culture and the match between work-related values of employees and organisation cultural traits.

There is an argument that when Chinese and Western organisations become involved with one another, national cultures come into play and result in workplace conflict. The clash of cultures in the intercultural selection interview (Lai and Wong, 2000) is an example of the influence of national cultures on interpersonal interaction processes in the workplace. Hofstede's text on 'Culture's Consequences' (Hofstede, 2001) made a significant contribution to our understanding of the importance of national culture by highlighting its relevance to industry practitioners and the training of managers.

For the purpose of this study, culture can then be summarised as 'shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that

result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations' (Javidan and House, 2001, p.293). Culture will be identified through common values and practices, where values are recognised in the judgements and expectations of interviewers and candidates in selection interviews, and practices are seen in what interviewers and candidates actually do in the interviews.

1.6.3. Limitations of Hofstede's national culture study

Hofstede (2001, p.41) is a pivotal study of workplace values based on collecting more than 116,000 questionnaires completed by employees of IBM offices in 72 countries between 1967 and 1973. Although influential and admired for its timely relevance to industry needs at that time, and for the rigour in its methodology (Sondergaard, 1994), the study has been criticised. First, the sample lacks representation from communist and former communist cultures (Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars, 1996). Second, the values that were being sampled were limited; this became evident when the same study was extended in later years (Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars, 1996), Third, the sample population was restricted to one organisation, i.e., IBM (Sondergaard, 1994; Smith, Dugan and Trompenaars, 1996). Fourth, the data collected are now dated (Sondergaard, 1994). Fifth, the use of employee attitudes for inferring values may not be valid (Sondergaard, 1994). Sixth, the methodological assumptions are being challenged, giving rise to concerns about the eminence given to national culture at the expense of organisational and occupational cultures, and the implications of theorising culture as national (McSweeney, 2002). Seventh, the reliability and validity of the study could be contested (Williamson, 2002). Eighth, the study did not explore the effect of the national cultural values on organisational outcomes (Taras, Kirkman and Steel, 2010).

Of particular significance to this study is the question of whether national dimensions such as Hofstede's can be applied to intercultural communication at the interpersonal level. Smith (2004) suggests that it is possible to do so because the national dimensions are aggregated from data derived from individuals, and so it is possible to use national dimensions to explain individual behaviour and vice versa. Hofstede himself developed and conducted programs over the years teaching intercultural competence to individuals in the workplace around the world on topics such as intercultural communication and intercultural negotiations. 'Exploring Culture' is one example of his practical books on teaching intercultural competence (Hofstede, Pedersen and Hofstede, 2002). In the context of the selection interview, Lai and Wong (2000) and Wong and Lai (2000) successfully used national dimensions, in particular those of Hofstede's power distance (Hofstede, 2001, Chapter 3) and identity (Hofstede, 2001, Chapter 5), to highlight how the behaviour of the Chinese candidates in the interviews was misjudged by interviewers from United States corporations.

1.6.4. Intercultural communication

'Intercultural communication' is a term coined by Hall over 50 years ago (Pusch, 2004) and refers to communication between individuals from different cultures, where culture influences interpersonal interaction (Neyer and Harzing, 2008). Culture is the 'context' within which the 'text' becomes meaningful, i.e., culture as shared knowledge is the communication context that is necessary to understand the 'text'. Interpreting the 'text' of a message without adequately taking into consideration the cultural context of that message can result in misinterpretation and miscommunication. Insofar as the culture of a society comprises the shared values, understandings,

assumptions, and goals that are learned from earlier generations, imposed by present members of a society, and passed on to succeeding generations (Deresky, 2006, Chapter 2), culture drives and determines the meaning of what is communicated. In a nutshell, culture is 'the set of important assumptions (often unstated) that members of a community share' (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright, 1997), with the result that the same cultural group of people have the same standards, communication procedures, codes of conduct and norms of behaviour (Deresky, 2006, Chapter 3), thus enabling meaningful communication to happen. Culture is critical for effective communication.

It is clear that culture cannot be reduced to a set of variables which can be easily manipulated. Hall (1959, pp.119-126; 1969, pp.1-6) has suggested that culture is communication, but as can be seen in this discussion, culture is more than merely communication. Take the example of the Chinese culture. The cultural attitudes or traits of the ethnic Chinese world are elusive. Schlevogt (2002) indicated that understanding traditional Chinese culture can be illuminating, but at the same time the old concepts can be wrongly applied to the present. This is a problem when studying an ancient culture such as that of China. Tradition must be understood, but its role should not be overemphasised or wrongly applied.

The 'communal ownership' (Kameda, 2005) of the knowledge of culture gives culture its taken-for-granted character. How the values and rules of two different cultures may compare with each other can be understood from the observation of similarities and differences in how they each send, receive and interpret an act of communication. A culture's values and rules can be learnt and understood by observing its communication processes.

1.6.5. The employment interview and its structure

Intercultural communication in the employment interview is under-researched although the literature on the employment interview is now considerable and spans a century of research. Since 1955, this has included a small but growing number of studies on the intercultural selection interview. Over 20 review articles written about employment interview research, since the seminal work of Wagner (1949) through to the present work of Macan (2009), show that there is no one accepted framework that gathers and consolidates the wide range of topics in the literature. What they do reveal is that research on the employment interview seems to have produced data that show that its interviewing techniques for predicting selection success are highly reliable and valid. Researchers and professional practitioners now accept the superiority of the structured interview as a reliable and valid tool for selection (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004; Macan, 2009).

Although the same literature supports the view that the structured interview improves the psychometric properties of the interview for the purpose of selection, this is not a universal view (McFarland, Ryan, Sacco and Kriska, 2004; Macan, 2009). The behavioural description interview (Janz, 1982; Janz, Hellervik and Gilmore, 1986; Janz, 1989) and the situational interview (Latham, Saari, Pursell and Campion, 1980; Latham, 1989) are example of this type of interview, now used by many interviewers. However, there are three reasons for questioning the widespread use of the structured interview for the purpose of selecting candidates of other cultures for job roles. First, these instruments have been developed in the United States and Canada with no, or limited, consideration of cultural diversity. For example, in developing the

behavioural interview, Janz (1982) did not consider the diversity of its participants. Motowidlo, et al. (1992) considered only Whites, Blacks and Hispanics in developing their behavioural instrument. In developing the situational interview, Latham, Saari, Pursell and Campion (1980) included Whites and Blacks but no other cultures. None of these studies has specifically explored other minority groups in the country who are likely to be more susceptible to the influences of cultural differences in the selection interview. Moreover, all these studies were conducted in the United States and Canada, and therefore the tools are likely to be culturally biased.

Second, Huffcutt and Roth (1998) suggest that the structured interview has the potential to yield high selection validity and small racial group differences. Studies on the influence of race and race-similarity on interview outcomes, however, remain inconclusive. Some race studies (Campion, Pursell and Brown, 1988; Motowidlo, et al., 1992) and race-similarity research (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996) show that race and race-similarity impact on interviewer evaluations despite the use of the various forms of structured interview. Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003), on the other hand, found that race and race similarity do not impact on the interview. Taken together, these works raise the question of whether the structured interview should be used as confidently in intercultural selection interviews as in intracultural selection interviews.

The third reason for questioning the use of structure in intercultural selection interviews is the possible presence of discrimination in the process of the interview. The lack of findings on the impact of culture on interview ratings (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003) suggests that culture may not impact on interview outcomes;

however, this does not mean that culture has no influence on the interview process. In fact the interview process is influenced by the subtle effects of culture on perceptions and judgements (Macan, 2009).

There is a tendency to ignore further research into understanding how culture may influence the intercultural interview, because of the evidence from some studies that the structured interview can successfully mitigate the influence of race or ethnicity. Being able to mitigate these effects does not mean that culture, a much more subtle influence than race or ethnicity, is also being eliminated. These studies merely prove that culture is being suppressed and ignored. Research should investigate these influences.

The intercultural selection interview is a social interaction process between the interviewer and candidate that simultaneously involves the act of communication and the task of selection interviewing. Very likely, this dual act is influenced by cultural differences between the interviewer and candidate. Culture is not just about interpretation from a common frame of reference; it leads to action (Goodman and Monaghan, 2007) that has consequences. It is therefore important to understand these cultural influences and their consequences for the intercultural selection interview.

1.7.   The significance of the research problem

In intercultural communication, there seems to be a tendency to attribute difficulties and problems to personal and other differences and to ignore the influence of culture. According to Brislin (2002), appreciating the influence of culture on interpersonal communication will reduce such instances of 'purposeful prejudice'. Culture in

communication can be particularly difficult and challenging when people of different backgrounds come together. There are two reasons why this is problematic. First, culture is resilient (Glazer and Moynihan, 1963, p.13) and the greater the difference between two cultures, the greater the potential for misinterpretation and misunderstanding in interpersonal interaction. Second, culture influences an individual's judgements of right and wrong, good and bad, and proper and improper. When people of different cultures clash in terms of such fundamental values, it is difficult to see the differences as merely cultural.

Communication can be divided into verbal and nonverbal. Verbal communication is speech content that can be visual (e.g., writing) or sound-based (e.g., speaking). Nonverbal communication can be visual (e.g., body language that may or may not accompany speaking), or sound-based (e.g., vocal characteristics accompanying speaking). Both the verbal and nonverbal aspects are central to the making of meaning in communication.

Verbal responses are particularly important in intercultural communication, so research on the intercultural selection interview phenomenon must explore verbal responses that include contents, verbal characteristics and vocal characteristics. First,

> 'Whatever is learnt in the interview is learnt through talk. Candidates, in other words, are judged largely on the basis of how they present themselves through verbal interaction, how they react to the interviewers' queries, and how they describe what they can do' (Gumperz, 1992).

Second, it has long been recognised that

> 'Words do mean different things to different people and these shades of meaning
> vary within subcultures and between ethnic groups as does the relativity of
> word-meaning' (Wright, 1969).

In short, verbal communication is important in any communication, including the intercultural selection interview.

Third, as argued above, the structured behavioural interview is preferred over the unstructured selection interview. Verbal communication in the structured interview is critical because interviewer evaluations and decisions are based on the content of the answers provided by candidates (Wright, 1969; Motowidlo, et al., 1992). Insofar as cultural meanings are embedded in the content of these answers, culture indirectly and invisibly influences the interviewer's interpretations of the candidate's responses.

Fourth, it is suggested that nonverbal communication is unimportant in determining the validity of the structured interview (Motodwidlo, et al., 1992). However, Harris (1989) suggests that where non-verbal communication may be influencing ratings, these could also be influenced by the information content given by the candidate. That is to say, verbal communication impacts on nonverbal communication, which then influences ratings. It is therefore important to explore the influence of verbal communication on the intercultural interview.

Fifth, a pragmatic factor influenced the focus of this study of the verbal contents, verbal characteristics and vocal characteristics of the interviewer and candidate. The

priority of the research is to capture real live selection interviews in real corporate settings, and the intention was that prospective organisations and participants would be less resistant to selection interviews being audiotaped than videotaped. Subsequent data collection experience has supported this view, as can be seen from the relatively small sample of only 11 cases of real live selection interviews being obtained over a space of two years and four months.

Research on the intercultural interview did not start until the middle of the 1950's, and even now there remains a dearth of literature on it. Consequently, today we still do not know much about culture in the employment interview (Macan, 2009). We do not know about the effectiveness of the structured interview in the context of an intercultural selection interview. There is no coherent framework for representing the various factors and influences that could potentially influence the communication process in an intercultural selection interview. Yet the selection interview continues to be widely used by practitioners, including line management and human resource personnel (Lievens, Highhouse and de Corte, 2005; Topor, Colarelli and Han, 2007) across a range of candidates of different cultural backgrounds.

As explained above, the structured interview has been successfully developed to the point of helping interviewers select staff in a reliable and valid manner. However, the structured interview is not necessarily immune to the influence of culture. Interviewers who are tempted to treat all job candidates in the same way, regardless of the cultural backgrounds of the candidates, may in fact be doing precisely what they wish to avoid, i.e., allowing culture to influence their judgements, evaluations and decisions about candidates who are culturally different from themselves. This research attempts to identify the cultural factors that influence the selection interview.

The study will examine the interview process. It will explore the factors influencing interviewing decisions and outcomes by focusing on the process of interpretation in intercultural selection interviews when non ethnic Chinese interviewers from AFSO interview ethnic Chinese candidates. Characteristics and features of effective and ineffective communication during these interpersonal interactions will be examined.

Communication between two people involves messages going through the phases of being coded, interpreted and decoded. Effective communication demands that the receiver's decoded message is the same as the sender's coded message. Preserving this common meaning, however, is influenced by the cultural framework of the sender and receiver. When the cultural frameworks differ because of the different cultural backgrounds of the sender and receiver, misinterpretations take place. This study will explore how the interviewer and candidate interpret and experience these characteristics and features, and it will attempt to understand the impact of these interpretations and experiences on interview outcomes. Such a process-driven research focus will take the work away from the less helpful discrimination overtones in some of the literature and seek a more positive contribution to diversity management in the literature (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002).

The literature on communication, culture and employment interviews is inadequate for explaining the phenomenon of culture in the selection interview. First, it lacks a comprehensive framework that explains the various influences and processes now thought to influence the intercultural selection interview. The fact that race and ethnicity studies produced varying effects led to the identification of some moderating and underlying factors. These studies of the various situational factors, psychological variables and cultural factors are fractured and not holistic. Second, while the structured

50

interview, particularly the BDI, is still being championed by researchers and practitioners as an effective moderator of race effects – one that produces highly reliable and valid selection outcomes – there are reasons to doubt the suitability of the structured interview in the case of intercultural interviews. Third, no work has been done on the cultural competence of interviewers and candidates in the intercultural selection interview. There are no tools and techniques on offer for effective intercultural interviewing. There is a need to explore the intercultural selection interview holistically and to identify a practical framework of intercultural competence that is characterised by adaptation and collaboration (Purhonen, 2008).

1.8.   Proposed broad research questions

The key research question and associated sub-research questions are therefore framed around the research problem and the data collection experience. While the literature has identified some of the mitigating situational factors, underlying psychological factors, and cultural variables that are influencing the intercultural selection interview, this research fills the literature gap by analysing and developing a holistic framework representing the influence of culture and cultural competence in the interview. The type of data that is available for research can also influence the nature of a research question. Qualitative research is particularly suitable when relatively little is known about a subject (Rocco, 2009). This is especially so with regard to the influence of culture and cultural competence on the intercultural selection interview. An agreement between the researcher and the research partner organisation with regard to data collection for the purposes of this thesis has further impacted on the particular research questions that have been the focus of this study. The availability of a relatively small number of cases of intercultural selection interviews and the capturing the relevant data on audiotape has

laid the basis for a particular focus in this thesis, namely, on exploring the verbal

contents, verbal characteristics and vocal characteristics of the participants in

intercultural selection interviews. Non verbals will be ancillary to the research, via data

items obtained from the debrief meetings with the individual interviewers and

candidates.

The proposed broad research questions are as follows:

Proposed Research Question 1:

What are the factors influencing structured behavioural description

interview outcomes when non-Chinese interviewers are interviewing

Chinese candidates for entry level positions in a large financial services

organisation in Australia?

Proposed Research Question 2:

How does culture influence the intercultural selection interview outcomes?

Proposed Research Question 3:

What is the influence of attributions on the perceptions of interviewers and

candidates during an intercultural selection interview?

Proposed Research Question 4:

Is the structured behavioural description interview a suitable mode of

selection involving Chinese candidates?

These questions will be explored in Chapter 2.

1.9.   Contributions of the study

In the course of a career in human resource consulting, this researcher observed that the intercultural selection interview is a broad problem area for the managers and human resource personnel of organisations, as well as for candidates who are unfamiliar with Australian interviewing cultural expectations. Frequent expressions of frustration by managers, human resource personnel and candidates were observed, particularly in interviews involving candidates from Asia. A review of the literature has revealed an important gap in the literature in regard to the need for a pragmatic and holistic framework for culture and cultural competence in intercultural selection interviews – one that will benefit all the key stakeholders.

Communication is a central process in organisations (Schein, 1969; Katz and Kahn, 1978). It is 'everything when it comes to surviving in an international business society' (Kameda, 2005). Problems that simply would not happen in a local business environment become crucial in intercultural situations because of the culturally-contexted nature of communication (Liddicoat, 2009). This study aims to understand the place of culture in the crucial situation of interpersonal interaction between interviewers and candidates in intercultural selection interviews (Steiner and Gilliland, 1996; Molinsky, 2007). Continual evaluations and decision-making during an intercultural selection interview can lead to significant outcomes (Ajirotutu, 1989). If the interviewer and candidate are ignorant or are not careful, culture interferes with this process (Gao, 2005). The next sections explain how this research will contribute to academic research, the industry, and the interviewer and candidate in an intercultural selection interview.

1.9.1. Filling a research gap for theory

It was claimed in the early 1990's that research into employment interviewing had matured (Anderson, 1992). It is probable that the development of structured interviews that could produce valid outcomes had impacted on this sentiment. However, theory development continues to be dominated by studies of structure that began in the 1920's and were revisited in the 1980's, and there have been few new theoretical contributions beyond that (Buckley, Norris and Wiese, 2000). Other researchers continue to state that we still do not know much about the use of the selection interview across cultures (Harris, 1989; Hough and Oswald, 2000; Stewart and Perlow, 2001; Macan, 2009). Our knowledge of the influence of culture upon the selection interview is inadequate and inconclusive. As seen from a review of studies between 2002 and 2009 (Macan, 2009), more recent work continues to focus on the quantitative validation of structured behavioural interviews, and so there continues to be a lack of theoretical research with frameworks and models that can provide practical guidelines to assist effective communication in intercultural selection interviews. This study will develop a new conceptual model informed by attribution theory (Knouse, 1989) that will answer the 'what' and 'how' of interviewer's and candidate's abilities to communicate effectively in intercultural selection interviews – a model based on attribution theory.

Attribution theory has been applied to areas of HRM such as performance management (Brown, 1984; Luthans, Avolio, Avey and Norman, 2007), leadership (Martinko and Gardner, 1987; Martinko, Harvey and Dasborough, 2011), conflict management (Baron, 1985; Bazarova and Walther, 2009) and decision making (Ford,

1985; Trope and Liberman, 2010). Although widely used in HRM, criticisms of the generalisability of attribution theory in HRM have been levelled at its application to personnel selection (Knouse, 1989). First, the studies reviewed by Knouse, upon which the attribution model was built, were based primarily on paper people studies. Paper people studies ignore the dynamism of interpersonal interactions between the interviewer and candidate in the selection interview process, and therefore the outcomes of these studies cannot simply be generalised to the real world of work. Second, the studies in the review were carried out in the United States. The behaviour that has been attributed to particular factors, whether internal or external and stable or unstable, may not apply in other cultural contexts. Having said that, it has been shown that the locus of cause dimension influences the relationship between interview success and interviewing self-efficacy (Tay, Ang and Van Dyne, 2006). Whether this applies to the context of an intercultural interview is unknown. These limitations provide an opportunity to explore the place of attribution theory in intercultural selection interviews based on live settings. A holistic framework of the intercultural selection interview which is informed by attribution theory will add to the employment interview literature, and fill the gap in the academic literature regarding theory development, particularly in relation to the intercultural selection interview.

1.9.2. Importance to industry

Cultural diversity is now more generally acknowledged as a source of added value and a competitive advantage to organisations (Richard, 2000; Raatikainen, 2002). It is enriching when a diverse workforce is able to bring an alternative and broader perspective to situations and problems in the workplace. This added broader perspective generates more and better quality information for managers to use in their

decision-making. This improved quality of information, leading to better-informed decisions, is what will help managers and companies to capitalise on the competitive advantage of cultural diversity.

This research will be significant for businesses wishing to embrace cultural diversity and requiring a just and appropriate method of selecting the right candidates for jobs from a multicultural talent pool. The employment interview has played an important role in selection for centuries (Adams and Smeltzer, 1936) and seems likely to continue to do so. The added challenge presented by a multicultural workforce is whether managers will have the ability to accurately assess candidates who are ethnically and culturally different from them. Culture influences HRM practices (Zhu, Thomson; De Cieri, 2008) and where employment decisions are compromised by ethnic and cultural factors, managers do not maximise the potential of a multiethnic workforce.

The intercultural selection interview is now a common occurrence in Australia, where a quarter of the population is born overseas and another quarter has at least one parent born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Major English-speaking countries like Canada and New Zealand also have high proportions of overseas-born people in their populations (Statistics Canada 2006 Census, Statistics New Zealand 2006 Census). We can expect that the intercultural selection interview is also a common occurrence in other parts of the English-speaking world. This study will contribute to industry by engaging in research to enhance our understanding of the factors and processes involved in the intercultural selection interview. It will be of value to the government in responding to the under-utilisation of a diverse workforce,

and to industries, including organisations and human resource agencies, in providing intercultural and intercultural training for their consultants.

The overarching significance of the thesis will derive from the development of a customised, structured behavioural interviewing model that may be more suitable for intercultural interviewing. In developing this model, this research may offer interviewers and candidates the opportunity to more effectively engage with each other in this crucial interpersonal communication process. Improved communication in this regard will increase the chances of industry and government to better utilise the resources of a multicultural workforce.

1.9.3. Benefits to practitioners

Interviewing and selection are core functions of HRM which is "inextricably linked to business strategy and structure" (Thite, 2001, p.312). Understanding the influence of culture on the interviewing process is also central to developing practical interventions for the workplace (Daniels and DeWine, 1991). Today's interviewers are expected to conduct selection interviews with candidates from other cultures. Culture determines and explains action in the selection interview (Jensen, 2005), and interviewers and candidates must learn to adapt their culture to that of the other (Berry, 1997; Molinsky, 2007). It is important for interviewers to thoroughly appreciate the underlying factors that are impacting on their perceptions and evaluations of the candidates, and for candidates to understand the underlying factors impacting on their success in interviews, thus helping them identify the areas they need training in before applying for jobs. Some researchers refer to this ability to adapt as 'cultural intelligence' (Earley, Ang and Tan, 2006, p.201).

Cultural intelligence (CQ) is of critical importance for HRM, including those businesses wishing to do business in Asia (Stening, 2006). This includes the skills to accommodate national and organisational cultures. In HRM, CQ is important in the area of selection, training and development. CQ is helpful in developing more effective interpersonal communication skills (Earley and Ang, 2003; Peterson, 2004). It is a requirement of both participants in the interpersonal interaction process if they are to develop a good working relationship with one another (Triandis, 2006). In our global business environment, CQ is increasingly a necessary attribute of managers and workers (Molinsky, 2007), who must have the ability to adapt to new cultural environments (Earley, Ang and Tan, 2006, Chapter 5) in their everyday interpersonal interactions with one another.

CQ is defined as '… the ability to make sense of unfamiliar contexts and then blend in' (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004, p.139). It has three components: the cognitive, the physical and the emotional/motivational. While CQ shares many of the properties of emotional intelligence (EQ), it goes one step further by "… equipping a person to distinguish behaviours produced by the culture in question from behaviours that are peculiar to particular individuals and those found in all human beings" (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004, p.140). EQ is the ability to grasp what is human and makes us different from each other, and CQ discerns the kind of behavior that characterises groups, or is peculiar to a person or group, or which is neither universal nor idiosyncratic. Furthermore, CQ is the ability, developed over time, to see patterns of behaviour that can guide someone in the anticipation of how people are likely to act in the future. CQ and EQ share the "same propensity to suspend judgement – to think before acting".

According to Earley and Mosakowski (2004), CQ is part innate and part cultivated. Anyone reasonably alert, motivated and poised can attain an acceptable level of CQ. Interestingly, those most socially successful among their peers often have the greatest difficulty making sense of and being accepted by cultural strangers. This is because those who fully embody the habits and norms of their native culture may be most alien to people from other cultures. On the other hand, sometimes those who are more detached from their own culture can more easily adapt to another culture because they are used to being observers and making a conscious effort to fit in. Earley and Mosakowski (2004) also take the view that CQ can be developed, so long as the individual is psychologically healthy and professionally competent. The ability to adapt is more than just to possess tacit knowledge and emotional social intelligence. It includes the ability to understand and master situations, to persevere, and to do the right things when needed.

Seven CQ profiles are identified by the authors – as follows: (1) the provincial works well with his own culture but not with others; (2) the analyst methodically deciphers rules and expectations, realise he is in alien territory, and works in stages to find out how to interact; (3) the natural relies on intuition and first impressions, is usually right but not sure how the culture seems to work; (4) the ambassador does not know much, but convincingly communicates that he belongs where he is, is confident, and has the humility to know that he does not know how to avoid underestimating cultural differences; (5) the mimic has control over his actions and behaviours, has insights into significant cultural cues, puts hosts and guests at ease, facilitates communication, and builds trust; (6) the chameleon scores highly on all the three CQ components, can be mistaken for a native, does not generate ripples, and can achieve results that

natives cannot because he has insider's skills and outsider's perspectives; and (7) the hybrid combines features of the above, and most prominently, of the ambassador and the analyst.

Brislin, Worthley and MacNab (2006) recommended a four-step procedure for preparing to adapt in a culturally intelligent manner to other cultures. These are: (1) anticipate likely behaviors that may be encountered, (2) understand the reasons behind the behaviors, (3) prepare for the emotions associated with the behaviors, and (4) capitalise on new knowledge to learn about other behaviors in that culture. In this way, the individual simultaneously learns, adapts and develops the cultural intelligence of the new place.

Effective CQ behaviour requires speaking and interacting in a particular manner. Maintaining an even speaking speed, keeping the right distance, managing the right eye contact, gesturing appropriately – all of these contribute to interaction outcomes. Deviating from the norm leads to a range of interpretations that make misunderstandings likely and cooperation impossible. Wrong words cause trouble. The right style of speaking and interacting can put a person at ease and make it easier to make a connection.

In the selection interview, a lack of CQ is problematic for the interviewer and candidate. An interviewer may make valid selection decisions but his behaviour may reveal that he is discriminatory and result in his falling foul of the law (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004). In this instance, culturally intelligent behaviour is more important than the predictive value of the interview methodology. In the case of

candidates being interviewed by recruiters from another culture, a high CQ can enable them to adopt the mannerism of their recruiters, making job offers more likely.

CQ has its critics (Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars, 2006). The three areas of criticism are (1) that it is discriminatory to assume that one culture is more intelligent than another, because cultural values are relative, (2) that the study of culture is post-modernistic, but to have a predominant definition of culture is modernistic, and (3) that categorising cultures is a form of stereotyping. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2006) propose three hypotheses to counter these criticisms. First, the synergy hypothesis argues that stating values as relative is not to be discriminatory but is potentially synergistic. Second, a complementary hypothesis holds that cultural differences do not mean that cultural experiences are completely subjective, random and arbitrary, but rather that cultural differences are complementary. Third, the latency hypothesis suggests that while culture is categorised according to what is presented at the surface of that culture, the opposite of what is presented is also present but in latent form. Categorising is therefore not the same as stereotyping. In proposing these hypotheses, the authors argued that CQ is an entirely credible concept.

This work seeks to help interviewers and candidates recognise culture and develop the skills of cultural intelligence so as to interact effectively in an intercultural selection interview. Discoveries and knowledge from theoretical research can benefit practitioners through the development of pragmatic intervention programs. Pragmatism drives the aim of this research, the purpose being to make a positive contribution to industry. In doing so, the research aims to offer solutions to some of the intercultural communication challenges that come with multiculturalism, which is

now recognised as a permanent feature of our contemporary life (Cook-Gumperz, 2001). The study supports and affirms Australia's commitment to being a multicultural nation despite the challenges this poses (Lawrence, 2007; Smolicz and Secombe, 2009; Karvelas, 2012).

1.9.4. Research Plan

The research plan for this study was made up five stages comprising 10 tasks completed between 1 March 2007 and 16 April 2012. The instigation for the commencement of the study was the publication in 2006 of a research paper, 'Cross-cultural interviewing in the hiring process: challenges and strategies', in the *Career Development Quarterly* by the author of the present study, then working in industry, and two academics at the Australian National University. The author subsequently began a PhD thesis at the Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University, which was then transferred to the same university's Faculty of Business and Economics, after the initial supervisor left the Graduate School. The transfer took place on 1 July 2011.

Stage 1 of the research was devoted to defining the problem – one that is of interest to the government, industry and the community. Stage 2 was focused on identifying the gaps in the literature regarding the research problem. The outcome of Stages 1 and 2 was a research proposal that included the research questions and a draft of the introduction and literature review chapters. Stage 3 was a continuation of the literature review with the purpose of designing and selecting the most appropriate methods for studying the research problem. This included the development and pre-testing of a research interview protocol for use when debriefing the research participants. Stage 4

focused back onto the real world in order to identify a suitable organisation willing and able to produce the necessary research data, and steps were taken to gather the rich data. The data collection period was disrupted by the global financial crisis (GFC) and so this stage of the research became protracted. A total of 35 interviews were audiotaped, consisting of 11 live selection interviews, 13 debrief interviews with the interviewers, and 11 debrief interviews with the candidates. Stage 4 took the form of capitalising on an opportunity to present a methodology paper, 'Investigations of the influence of culture on the job interview: need for a grounded theory approach', at the 2008 Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management conference. A poster, 'A Framework of the influence of culture on the job interview', was presented at the 2009 Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management conference. Finally, Stage 5 concentrated on the analysis and interpretation of the findings, with support from the literature, and on conclusions and recommendations for future research, and on the finalisation of the thesis. A paper, 'Tripping over the culture talk in the structured selection interview process', was presented at the 2011 British Academy of Management conference. Another paper, 'Intercultural selection interview: the moderating role of culture in structured selection interviews', was presented at the 2011 Macquarie University Higher Degree Research EXPO.

In summary, the thesis took just a little over five years to finish, and was completed along with three peer-reviewed conference papers and one poster presentation. Figure 1 illustrates the research plan of the thesis and highlights the milestones in the development of the thesis.

Figure 1: Research plan

THESIS STAGES	TASKS	PhD YEARS
Pre-thesis stage		• Paper published in CDQ.
1	Problem definition	Year 1 milestones: • Research proposal. • Research questions. • Draft of introduction and literature review chapters. • Research methodology established. • Development of research protocol. • Draft of methodology chapter.
2	Literature review	
	Develop theoretical framework	
	Identify research questions	
3	Design research	
	Select research methods	
4	Identify research organization	Years 2 and 3 milestones: • Partnership with AFSO. • 11 cases of selection interviews captured on audiotape. • NVivo-assisted thematic analysis of data. • Paper presented at ANZAM conference. • Poster presented ANZAM conference.
	Collect data	
5	Analyse and interpret data	Years 4 and 5 milestones: • Draft of analysis and interpretations, and conclusion chapters. • Finalisation of thesis for submission. • Paper presented at BAM conference. • Paper presented at Macquarie University's EXPO.
	Report writing	

1.10. Summary

This thesis seeks to enhance the intercultural selection interview to make it more effective, so that the right candidate is selected for the right job. In a multicultural environment such as Australia there are barriers when interviewers are interviewing candidates whose cultures are different from their own. It is critical to overcome these barriers in Australia for reasons of skills shortage. A skills migration policy is a start to addressing the labour shortage in the country. For the program to be effective, the underemployment of the migrant workforce must be addressed. Along with the Prime Minister's introduction of an equity policy with regard to multiculturalism in Australia (Karvelas, 2012), human resource practitioners must improve their practices in terms of interviewing.

There seem to be three important issues to be addressed regarding the intercultural selection interview. First, there are many factors that influence these interviews and the relative strength of these influences is unknown. There is no one comprehensive study that investigates the various factors in the context of the selection interview as a single interaction event. Second, the structured interview, particularly the behavioural description interview, has developed into a reliable and valid selection method. However, there are questions as to the efficacy of the BDI in the context of the intercultural employment interview. Third, attribution and attribution retraining make a difference to employment interview outcomes, but it is not clear if culture and attribution moderate the intercultural selection interview process and outcome.

There are pragmatic reasons for identifying the factors to which interviewers and

candidates are attributing to their positive and negative perceptions in any one single-interaction selection interview. Identifying the internally-attributed factors influencing the positive perceptions will highlight the strengths of the candidates, and identifying the internally-attributed factors influencing the negative perceptions will highlight the weaknesses of the candidates. Identifying the externally-attributed factors influencing perceptions will highlight the areas of responsibility the interviewers and/or the candidates must accept to ensure that external influences are eliminated and to ensure that the evaluation and selection of the candidates are not discriminatory but based on the candidates' merit. For the interviewers, it is particularly important that they fulfil the legal responsibility of correcting the effects of race on interview processes and outcomes.

This research seeks to identify what happens during the actual interview process from the point of view of non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Two key observations about the employment interview literature in its current state are made in this chapter. First, various studies have identified many factors that are influencing the intercultural employment interview, but there is no one comprehensive study that holistically investigates these various factors in the context of the selection interview as a single-interaction event. Second, the structured interview, particularly the behavioural description interview, which is commonly referred to as the 'BDI', has developed into a reliable and valid selection method; however, there are questions as to the efficacy of the BDI in the context of the intercultural employment interview. This chapter presents a literature review focusing on the intercultural selection interview to articulate these two observations, and proposes the research questions for the thesis.

2.1. Fit, perception and cultural attribution

The purpose of an interview is to evaluate the person-job fit between a candidate and a job, and the person-organisation fit between a candidate and an organisation (Kristof-Brown, 2000). This evaluation influences the interview outcome. Establishing these fits depends on the interviewers' and candidates' perceptions of the candidates' qualities. Whether fit is perceived to be present or lacking, the reasons given by the interviewers and candidates about these candidates' qualities can be attributed either to something about the candidates, which is to say, the reasons for fit or lack of it are internally attributed, or they can be attributed to something that is external to the candidates, which is to say, the reasons for fit or lack of it are externally attributed (Knouse, 1989). Attribution may be influencing perceptions of

person-job fit and person-organisation fit in the interview – perceptions that have implications for the psychological contract, both relational and transactional.

There are pragmatic reasons for identifying the factors that the interviewers and candidates are attributing to their positive and negative perceptions in any one single-interaction selection interview event. Identifying the internally-attributed factors influencing positive perceptions will highlight the strengths of the candidates, and identifying the internally-attributed factors influencing the negative perceptions will highlight the weaknesses of the candidates. Identifying the externally-attributed factors influencing perceptions will highlight the areas of responsibility which the interviewers and/or candidates must accept to ensure both that external influences are eliminated and that the evaluation and selection of the candidates are not discriminatory but based on the candidates' merit.

For example, an uncluttered environment contributing to the candidate's discomfort in the interview is an external factor that is the responsibility of the interviewer; a need to get to another appointment by the candidate that is causing stress to the candidate at the interview is an external factor that is the responsibility of the candidate; and perceptions that are influenced by culture are the joint responsibility of the interviewers and candidates. Knowing all the internal and external factors that are associated with the positive and negative perceptions of the interviewers and candidates in a single-interaction selection interview event has implications for practitioners and policymakers.

People from different cultures can attribute an act to very different causes or factors (Ronen, 1986) and the same factor can result in people feeling and acting differently.

68

Take, for example, a case where a Chinese candidate is feeling nervous. A non-Chinese Australian interviewer may internally attribute this nervousness, a personality trait, to the candidate's lack of confidence, but the candidate may externally attribute it to the interviewer being aggressive. An example of where the same factor can have a different impact on people of different cultures is seen in the value attributed to an education. An educational qualification is highly valued in Chinese culture and Chinese candidates will be tempted to highlight their educational qualifications in a selection interview in an attempt to evoke the interviewers' positive perceptions of their suitability for employment. But in Australia, work experience may be more valued than educational qualifications, which means that a candidates' emphasis on their educational qualification can result in a quite different effect to what they expect, for example, a perception that they are over-qualified. The culturally determined value of an education positively influences Chinese candidates but negatively influences non-Chinese interviewers in Australia. Cultural factors may directly influence the perceptions of a candidates' fitness for a job or an organisation.

There is another way that culture can influence attribution in an interview. Culture may predispose individuals to attribute causes of events internally to themselves, or externally to others and/or to other external factors (Shirazi and Biel, 2005). For example, individualists are more prone to internal attributions and collectivists to external attributions. When the non-Chinese interviewers are interviewing Chinese candidates in a selection interview, this cultural predisposition may cause the non-Chinese interviewers to attribute much of their perceptions of candidates' behaviour to the candidates' personal qualities, such as abilities, motivation and values, but the Chinese candidates may be attributing much of their own behaviour to external factors such as the interviewers' behaviour, the physical environment and

luck. The culture-induced tendency to make internal or external attributions may influence perceptions of person-job fit and person-organisation fit.

In summary, culture and attribution may influence the perceptions of the candidates' fit with the job and the organisation. Culture-based factors may be influencing the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates to view the candidates' strengths and weaknesses in different ways, so that something considered a strength to the Chinese may be considered a weakness to the non-Chinese. Culture may predispose the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates to attribute perceptions in different ways, i.e., the non-Chinese interviewers may be attributing a candidate's behaviour to an internal factor, but the candidate may be attributing the same behaviour to an external factor. To the extent that culture-based attributions are influencing perceptions of the candidates' strengths and weaknesses, such perceptions must be re-evaluated in the light of cultural differences to more accurately reflect the true strengths and weaknesses of the candidates.

2.2. Attribution theory

Attribution theory attempts to explain how individuals explain the causes of events that they experience (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p.23) and it has been used successfully to explain behaviour (Weiner, 1985). The theory goes back to Heider (1958, p16). It is made up of two key components. First, causal search is the process of ascribing causes to events. Second, causal attributions are explanations of the events (Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009) that are the judgements of the observer (Reeder and Brewer, 1979). Causal search and causal attributions are therefore social phenomena that are subject to the personal perceptions of the observer.

Attribution has three dimensions: locus of cause, stability of cause, and controllability of cause (Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009). Locus of cause refers to whether the individual believes that the cause of the event is due to internal or external factors. Attribution theory therefore explains whether behaviours are internally or externally motivated (Knouse, 1989). Stability of cause refers to whether the individual believes that the cause of the event is permanent or temporary. Controllability of cause refers to whether the individual believes the cause is under his or her control. Figure 2 illustrates these dimensions of attribution.

Figure 2: Attribution theory according to Knouse (1989)
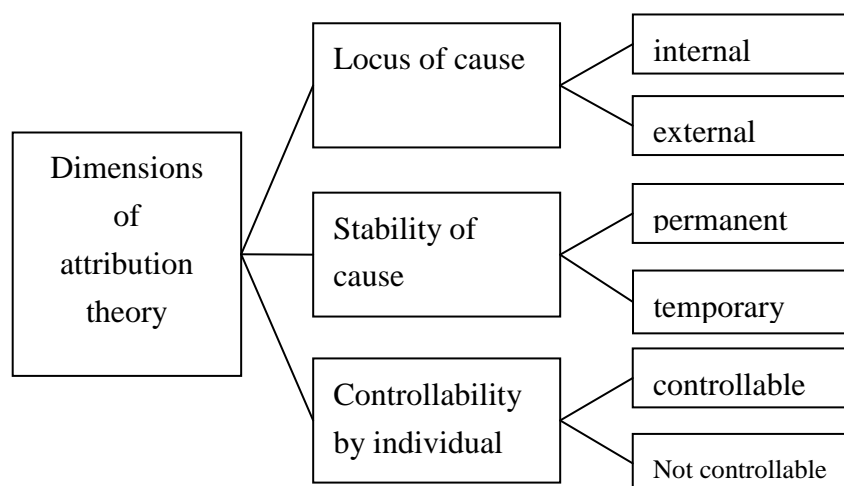
Three criteria determine whether a particular behaviour is attributed to internal or external factors. These are distinctiveness, consistency and consensus. For Knouse (1989), internal factors are attributed to behaviours that are low in distinctiveness, high in consistency, and low on consensus, i.e., the same behaviour is seen in different situations, behaviour is constant over time, and people behave differently in the same

situation. External factors are attributed to behaviours that are high in distinctiveness, high in consistency, and high in consensus, i.e., behaviour changes with the situation, the same behaviour is seen in the same situation, and people behave in the same way in the same situation. According to Weiner, et al., (1972), internal factors can be stable (e.g., ability), or unstable (e.g., motivation); and external factors can be stable (e.g., task difficulty), or unstable (e.g., luck). Examples of internal factors of motivation, sometimes also referred to as dispositional factors, are personality, motivation and ability. Examples of external factors of motivation, sometimes referred to as situational factors, are task difficulty, environmental constraints and luck.

Attribution theory is likely to be significant for the selection interview because the factors attributed to the interview outcome, i.e., success or failure, by the interview participants, and particularly by the candidates, influence their motivation, emotions and performance in subsequent interviews (Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009). Attributions to uncontrollable factors, e.g., lack of ability, lead to lower motivation and poorer performance. Attribution to controllable factors, e.g., lack of effort, result, on the other hand, in higher motivation and stronger performance (Weiner, 1985, 1995). Attribution theory therefore has a functional purpose in that it makes it possible to explain past events and to predict future behaviour (Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009).

The selection interview is a high-risk event that will cause candidates to search for reasons for their failure in the interview. Where the outcomes are negative, unexpected and/or important, the chances of searching for causes increase (Weiner, 1985; Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009). The cohort of literature on

communication strongly suggests that attributions of participants' behaviour and their cultural values impact on interview decisions and outcomes. Attribution theory provides the framework for how people view their performance in an interview and how they might improve their chances of interviewing successfully. This study proposes to use attribution theory to support the development of a conceptual model of the intercultural selection interview.

An attribution-based theory offers an alternative explanation to those proposed in the communication and discrimination literatures to account for racial differences in interview outcomes discussed in the selection literature. Such a theory meets the ongoing call for researchers to examine processes and develop theories that can explain influences in the intercultural employment interview (Arvey, 1979; Liden and Parsons, 1986: Buzzanell, 2002; Macan, 2009). Reviewing the literature is part of the process of developing a theory (Suddaby, 2006) and the literature review in this chapter is conducted with the objective of developing an attribution-based theory of the intercultural selection interview.

2.3.   Lawrence's model of cross-cultural practices

A model of cross-cultural practices was proposed by Lawrence in 2007 as a response to the challenge posed by the call for cultural integration and hence the threat to multiculturalism in Australia. Three components make up successful practices in the context of intercultural interaction. Reflective practice before, during and after the event highlight the importance of preparation and practice. The socio-cultural practice of effectively engaging with the other highlights the importance of reaching out to the other culture by fine-tuning the skills needed to suit the other. The critical practice of

awareness of self and context highlights the importance of knowing how the self is different from the other in fundamental ways and therefore enables one to challenge one's own assumptions and beliefs. Figure 3 illustrates the model comprising of the three practices.

Figure 3: Lawrence's model of cross-cultural practices

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
Reflecting before practice
Reflecting in practice
Watching and listening
Reflecting on practice

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE
Reflecting before practice
Reflecting in practice
Watching and listening
Reflecting on practice

CRITICAL PRACTICE
Critical self-awareness
Critical context awareness

SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICE
Seeking help and information
Making social contact
Participating in groups
Seeking feedback
Expressing disagreement
Saying 'no'

According to the model for cross-cultural practices proposed by Lawrence (2007), internal attribution is critical to the development of cross-cultural competence. This has the support of the interviewing self-efficacy (I-SE) model by Tay, Ang and Van Dyne (2006). The self-efficacy model states that belief in their own interviewing ability influences the performance of candidates in an interview. In other words, internal attribution is related to positive interview outcomes. When Chinese candidates attribute failures to external factors (such as bad luck), this decreases their I-SE. In other words, the cultural predisposition of the Chinese candidates to attribute

failures externally influences their I-SE in negative ways, and this in turn negatively affects their interview outcomes. Hence, attribution theory supports the influence of culture in the intercultural interview.

2.4. Culture and the structured interview

This section reviews the literature in regard to the development of the structured interview over time, and then examines the structured interview in an intercultural employment situation. The review will show how, over time, researchers have focused on a very narrow view of a successful interview. In particular, researchers continue to be interested in the structured interview, and specifically the validity characteristic of the interview. On the other hand, there continues to be a lack of literature on understanding other aspects of a successful interview, e.g., the nature of discrimination, and candidate reactions to the interview. Given that the structured interview, especially the behavioural interview, is now generally accepted as superior, there is an urgent need to address this gap in the literature.

The employment interview has come a long way since the days of the call for its moratorium (England and Paterson, 1970). Up until then, reviewers of the literature (Wagner, 1949; Mayfield, 1964; Ulrich and Trumbo, 1965; Wright, 1969) bemoaned the lack of validity and reliability in the interview (Schmitt, 1976). This is no longer the case. Despite a slow start, 100 years of research has resulted in the ability of the interview, specifically the structured interview, to predict performance and to select the most suitable candidates for roles (Harris, 1989; Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002; Macan, 2009).

There are now over 20 reviews of the employment interview literature, starting from Wagner (1949) through to Macan (2009). Together they cover over 100 years of research. An examination of these review articles on the employment interview research shows that the first documented study of the employment interview was Scott (1915). Scott (1915) and Scott (1916) are important because they question the reliability and validity of the selection interview, and hence kick-started a series of research developments in a particular direction in the early decades of selection interview research. In due course, this led to the development of a number of structured interview tools and techniques of which the behavioural description interview is very popular. It is therefore appropriate to begin this review by describing these two studies by Scott.

Scott (1915) was based on real live selection interviews of applicants for sales roles in a tobacco company in the United States. 36 applicants were interviewed by each of the six district managers, who then rank ordered the candidates in terms of their hiring preferences. The intention was to select half the applicants for employment and so it was important that the managers agreed which applicants should be in the successful top half and which should be in the unsuccessful bottom half. The six managers disagreed on the placement of 28 of these 36 applicants regarding which half they should be assigned to. In other words, serious doubts were raised as to the reliability of using the interview as a selection method.

The second study by Scott (1916) highlighted the problem of validity when using an interview to select salesmen. Interviewer ratings were compared with the performance ratings of 12 salesmen given by 13 company executives. The results from this study showed that the ability of interviewer ratings to predict the sales ability of salesmen was

'little better than chance' (Wagner, 1949). In other words, there was a significant problem with the validity of the interview as a selection method. Together, the two studies by Scott (1915, 1916) highlighted the psychometric weaknesses of the interview as a selection method. In practice, this meant that the interview could not be relied on in a consistent way to select successful staff.

The findings of Scott (1915, 1916) set an important direction for subsequent research on the selection interview. Improving the psychometric properties of the interview became a central focus of researchers in the following years. In particular, there was a call for some form of standardisation and structure in the systematic questioning, conduct and decision-making processes of the interview (Wagner, 1949; Mayfield, 1964; Ulrich and Trumbo, 1965) as well as for model building and validity testing (Wright, 1969). It was over 60 years before the appearance of the structured interview, in the form of the situational interview (Latham, Saari, Pursell and Campion, 1980), started to show the promise of improving the psychometric properties of the interview as a selection tool. Researchers and practitioners then begin to be less pessimistic and more hopeful of seeing the interview as a useful selection method (Arvey and Campion, 1982).

Latham, Saari, Pursell and Campion (1980) in the United States developed a type of the structured interview called the situational interview and applied it in three separate studies to test its psychometric properties. The interview was developed in several stages. First, a job analysis of critical incidents in the job position was identified. Second, interview questions were framed around these critical incidents, where applicants would be asked for their likely responses to these incidents. Third, two or more interviewers independently rated the answers provided by the applicants. These

ratings were guided by a set of behavioural benchmarks attached to the rating scales.

The first two studies were conducted in a saw mill and involved 49 predominantly White saw mill workers, and the second study involved 63 all-White front-line foremen. The third study was conducted in a pulp and paper mill and involved 56 applicants for entry-level positions, all of whom were Blacks. These studies yielded strong reliability and validity to support the view that behavioural intentions are good indications of actual behaviours.

At around the same time, an alternative type of structured interview, i.e., the behavioural description interview, was developed in Canada (Janz, 1982; Janz, Hellervik and Gilmore, 1986; Janz, 1989). Like the situational interview, the BDI also relied on the critical incident technique to identify situations around which to frame the interview questions. However, unlike the situational interview, candidates were asked to respond to these questions based on actual incidents that they had experienced. While the situational interview supposes that intentions are predictors of future behaviour, the behavioural interview supposes that actual past behaviour is the best predictor of future behaviour.

Janz (1982) conducted an interview study to test the psychometric properties of the BDI. The interviewees were 15 teaching assistants and the interviewers were 16 undergraduates. Each interviewee was interviewed four times by four different interviewers, two of whom had been trained in the BDI method and two in standard interviewing techniques. Interviewers were required to interview the teaching assistants, obtain information and predict the ratings that students would give the teaching assistants, i.e., this was a study of performance predictions and not of

selection. The results showed that while the validity of the BDI method was significantly high, reliability was significantly low. These findings implied that reliability was not a condition for validity in the selection interview.

An Australian study (Orpen, 1985) duplicated the above research by Janz (1982) in the real live context of 19 salesmen working for a large life insurance company. Interviewer predictions were compared with performance measures of sales and supervisor ratings. This study again indicated the superior validity of the BDI over the unstructured interview. Like Janz (1982), the study also found that the BDI did not have to be reliable in order for it to be valid. It was therefore not surprising that subsequent studies concentrated more on examining the validity rather than the reliability of the structured interview. No study appears to explore this irony and its implications for candidates' reactions, for example.

By the mid 1990s, 15 components of the structured interview had been identified that could improve the psychometric properties of an interview (Campion, Palmer and Campion, 1997). These related to either the content or the process of the interview. From the 1990s through to the present day, the structured interview, particularly the BDI, became increasingly accepted as a valid selection method (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002; Macan, 2009). During the same period, however, new areas that had been neglected also began to gather momentum.

This researcher notes three observations which highlighted the potential problem of using the structured interview in the context of intercultural selection interviews. First, while the BDI was the most valid of all the structured interviews, it produced greater negative reactions from applicants than did the conventional structured interview

(Moscoso, 2000). This meant that the benefits of validity may be offset by negative applicant reactions. Second, in legal cases of discrimination in interviews, the courts were ruling in favour of standardisation, not for the psychometric properties of structure but for the need to treat everyone fairly (Williamson, et al., 1997; Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004; Simola, Taggar and Smith, 2007). Despite standardisation, these studies showed that discriminatory references in interviews disadvantaged the interviewer even if the interview was valid. It would appear that an interview can be valid and still be discriminatory. Third, many validity studies of the behavioural interview have been carried out in North America (Latham and Millman, 2002) and relatively few have been conducted in other parts of the world. This raises the question of whether conclusions about the effectiveness of the behavioural interview can be generalised to cultures outside of North America.

The reactions of applicants and the courts to structure in interviews are areas for more intercultural interview research. The structured interview may be valid but not necessarily immune to the effects of race (McFarland, Ryan, Sacco and Kriska, 2004; Macan, 2009). There are unexplained inconsistent findings in the literature regarding the effects of race in the structured intercultural interview, including persistent small effects (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998; Hough and Oswald, 2000; Judge, Higgins and Cable, 2000; Moscoso, 2000). This raises the question of whether the structured interview is equally valid in intercultural and intracultural interviews. Inconsistent and small effects of race may be insignificant, but their practical impact may be important (Moscoso, 2000). Small differences in interview scores or ranking can mean the difference between a candidate getting or not getting a job. It is therefore important to explore and understand the reasons for these observations.

2.5. Towards an attribution-based theory of intercultural interviews

From the mid 1950's to the 1980's, a small number of studies exploring race variables did little to advance our understanding of the intercultural employment interview. Their findings on what influences employment interview processes and outcomes are erratic (Arvey and Campion, 1982; Harris, 1989), and race seems to interact with other factors to influence employment interview outcomes (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; Mullins, 1982). At best, these studies suggest that race may be a cue to other factors that are influencing the intercultural employment interview (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006; Macan, 2009). This has led to an ongoing call for researchers to examine processes and develop a theory that can explain influences on the intercultural employment interview (Arvey, 1979; Liden and Parsons, 1986; Buzzanell, 2002; Macan, 2009).

Continuing but intermittent small amounts of research in the 1990s to the present day showed some promise in understanding the influence of race in the intercultural employment interview. Several mechanisms have been proposed to explain the process of this influence. These are fit selection (Hough and Oswald, 2000), cultural stereotyping (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001) and ethnicity biases (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000; Dovidio, 2001; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006). Three observations have been made about these explanations. First, the discriminatory explanations offered in the literature ignore the possibility of attribution as an alternative explanation for how culture may be influencing the intercultural employment interview. Second, the explanations for the underlying mechanisms of these processes have never been tested. Third, while the cohorts of literature on communication and discrimination offer different insights into different aspects of the intercultural employment interview

process, there is currently no coherent theoretical framework to draw the factors together.

Since the first empirical study on the intercultural employment interview conducted by Blau in the late 1940s (Blau, 1963, p.3), the literature has identified many factors that influence interviewers' perceptions of candidates in an interview. This literature review will gather a list of those known factors that are influencing the perceptions and evaluations of the candidates, and highlight the following gaps in the literature in order to formulate proposed research questions.

1. Studies tend to examine one or several factors at any one time. There is no research that has attempted to gather the possible factors in the course of a selection interview as a single-interaction event. This study will examine the intercultural selection interview holistically to capture the possible factors that are influencing perceptions in the course of the interview as a single interaction event. In doing so, the study will also establish the relative strengths of the influences of these factors on perceptions.

2. Many studies are conducted primarily from the interviewers' point of view and relatively few studies are found that research the candidates' perspectives (Latham and Millman, 2002). Even fewer studies are found that simultaneously explore the interviewers' and candidates' experiences. This study gives equal voice to the interviewers and candidates by interviewing the interviewers and candidates who are key players in the research sample of the selection interviews.

3. The literature reveals that many factors are influencing the intercultural selection interview. However, the literature does not identify and separate the factors and their characteristics into those that have a greater tendency to positively influence

the interviewers and candidates and those that tend to negatively influence them. Neither has the literature established the degree to which attributions happen in intercultural selection interviews. This thesis will identify the factors that are positively and negatively influencing the interviewers' and the candidates' perceptions. These factors will also be separated into internal and external causes of the perceptions. In this way the study will have practical implications for the interviewers, enabling them to re-evaluate their perceptions of a candidate to more accurately reflect the candidate's strengths and weaknesses.

4. Many validity studies are carried out in North America (Latham and Millman, 2002). These studies have resulted in the development of many so-called effective interviewing tools and techniques, of which the structured behavioural interview is very popular with academics and many large western companies. Researchers are cultural beings and insofar as these selection tools and techniques are developed primarily by North American researchers, the tools and techniques may also be culturally biased. By comparing the perspectives and attributions of the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates in the context of an Australian financial services institution that uses such tools and techniques, this study will examine the place of culture in the structured behavioural interview.

2.6.   Race and race-related terminologies

The uses of race and race-related terms in the literature have evolved over time and these uses are inconsistent. It is important to clarify these terminologies before reviewing the intercultural employment interview literature, because race is an important part of the thesis and will influence the generalisability of the research findings. It is therefore helpful to clarify how these terms are used in the literature,

including how they have evolved over time. Common race and race-related terms in the United States literature are White, Black, Hispanic and Asian. The term Chinese is less frequently used but is included in this explanation because the Chinese are a key ethnic group of this thesis.

White, Caucasian, Anglo, European. These have commonly been used to refer to a particular racial group. They are often used interchangeably. Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006) is explicit about this interchangeability with his use of the terms Caucasian and White. Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford (2006) uses the term European-American to mean Caucasian. Sometimes the term is used in an ethnic sense, for example, Anglo American (Cargile, 1997) and White Hispanic (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006). White continues to be used in the literature (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003; McFarland, Ryan, Sacco and Kriska, 2004; Buckley, et al., 2007; Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008) and occasionally Caucasian (Goldberg, 2003; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006) is also used.

Black, African American, Negro. These words are also a reference to a particular racial group. Unlike the words used to denote the White population, the use of these words has evolved significantly over the years. The term Negro (Sattler, 1970) is no longer seen in the literature as it is now considered highly offensive and politically incorrect. Black is now commonly used (Ledvinka, 1971; de La Zerda, 1979; Mullins, 1982; Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003; McFarland, Ryan, Sacco and Kriska, 2004; Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford, 2006; Buckley, et al., 2007), and of late, African American (Goldberg, 2003; Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford, 2006; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006; Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008) is increasing seen in the literature.

Hispanic, Latin. These words also refer to a particular racial group and are used interchangeably (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003; Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford, 2006; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006). Sometimes the word Hispanic is used in the ethnic sense; for example, the term 'ethnic Hispanic' is used to distinguish 'ethnic' Hispanics from 'White' Hispanics (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006).

Asian. This is an ethnic term that includes nationals from various parts of Asia. This includes the Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Thai and Malaysians (Cargile, 1997). Sometimes it is seen as an ethnic group in itself, hence the term Asian American (Cargile, 1997; Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003). In actual fact, there are numerous ethnicities within the Asian group. It may be better to use Asian as a regional reference term as opposed to an ethnic term.

Chinese. This term is sometimes used in the literature to refer to an Asian national, for example Cargile (1997). The same author also differentiated the Mandarin-Chinese from Chinese of other dialects, and hence acknowledged that there are sub-ethnic groups even within the ethnic Chinese group itself.

2.7. Overview of intercultural selection interview literature

The intercultural employment interview literature dates from the first available study in 1955 to the present day. An overview of the literature shows that the studies can be separated into three cohorts of research. First, there are studies that focus on the structured employment interview as a selection method. These studies tend to be macro-analytic and are focused on identifying factors influencing interview outcomes

and/or ways and means to strengthen the psychometric properties of the interview as a selection device.

The first cohort of literature shows that although the use of structure in the interview continues to have strong advocates (Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002; Macan, 2009), support for the use of structure in the intercultural employment interview is not consistent. Authors point to the subtle nature of the influence of culture in the selection interview. The lack of consistency in these findings has led to more research on exploring underlying factors and processes. As a result, two other cohorts of research have clearly emerged, namely, studies on communication and on discrimination in the intercultural selection interview.

The literature that focuses on communication tends to be micro-analytic e.g., Motowidlo, et al. (1992), Lai and Wong (2000), and Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer (2008). It illuminates some of the underlying factors and processes in the intercultural employment interview, and shows that some of the underlying factors are cultural. The literature that focuses on discrimination is critical, because it highlights some of the processes and consequences of conscious and unconscious acts of discrimination in the intercultural employment interview e.g., Singer and Eder (1989), Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), and Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006). The significance of these acts is important because they impact on the ability of organisations to defend themselves against charges of discrimination by disgruntled candidates. The literature on discrimination offers further and different insights into the underlying processes of the intercultural interview from the other cohorts of research.

In reviewing each of the three cohorts of literature, factors that influence the intercultural employment interview will be highlighted, examined and explained. Summaries of each of these factors will show their respective contributions to the overall understanding of the intercultural employment interview. They will capture employment process issues, contribute to an attribution framework for the intercultural employment interview, and point to areas for further research.

The first substantiated study found on the employment interviews originated in the United States (Scott, 1915). Many subsequent studies are also based in the United States. Given that the researcher's culture and the culture in which the research is conducted can influence research outcomes, the places of origin of the various research articles are identified in the literature review. Unless otherwise stated, the research articles examined in this thesis are studies based in the United States. The countries of origin of non-United States based studies will be identified accordingly.

2.8.   Factors influencing intercultural interviews as a selection tool

The literature review in this section shows some of the factors that are influencing the intercultural employment interview and presents evidence of the subtlety of the influence of culture on the interview. The factors explored here are: race/ethnicity, racial/ethnic similarity, racial/ethnic cues, and other factors, i.e., interview structure, including panel composition, job complexity, job status, interviewee quality, minority sample sizes, and work values. Although these factors seem to interact with each other to a varying extent, the factors are explored one at a time. Where relevant, the articles are reviewed with an eye to the effects of each of the factors on the interviewers and interviewees.

87

2.8.1. Race and ethnicity

Evidence for the influence of race and ethnicity on interviewers and interviewees is variable. Some studies show the direct influence of race and ethnicity in an interview, for example, Roberts and Campbell (2006), Buckley, et al., (2007), and Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008), and others show small or no race influences, for example, Wing (1981) and Huffcutt and Roth (1998). Sometimes this influence is unexpected and favours the minority, for example, Mullins (1982).

Race and ethnicity are likely to influence interview processes and outcomes in direct and indirect ways. Interviewers and interviewees experience race effects in different ways. Different races also experience race effects in different ways (Motowidlo, et al., 1992). Reverse discrimination in favour of the minority group can happen (Mullins, 1982). When race does not impact on outcomes, it may still be an influence on process (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001). Influences that moderate race effects in an interview are structure (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998; Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003), candidate quality (Mullins, 1982; Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000), and interviewer prejudice (Mullins, 1982; Frazer and Wiersma, 2001). Overall, the evidence points more to the subtle influences of race than to the absence of it, and race-similarity between the interviewer and interviewee is potentially a more powerful influence on the interview.

There are a relatively high number of studies that support the presence of race effects on the interviewers in an interview. Race effects are present even in cases of the experience-based structured interview (Motowidlo, et al., 1992; Pulakos and Schmitt, 1995). These race effects are often small but they are persistent. These small effects

suggest the subtlety of race effects in the interview and are highlighted in four ways. First, these effects are seen not in the interview outcomes but in the interviewers' failure to remember the equal capabilities of interviewees from two different racial groups (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001). Second, these effects are seen in the differential outcomes under certain conditions based on the quality of the candidates (Mullins, 1978, 1982; Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000). Third, race influence in the interview can result in reverse discrimination where minorities are evaluated more favourably than the majority candidates; for example, when interviewer prejudice is high (Mullins, 1982). Fourth, while findings on race effects are variable, this does not appear to affect the ability of the structured interview to be reliable. These findings suggest that race effects in the intercultural interview are subtle and require further exploration.

A key piece of research that examined the influence of race and ethnicity in the interview is a meta-analytic review of 31 studies carried out to investigate the effect of race on employment interview evaluations (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998). In total, these studies consisted of 1,200 Hispanics, 4,169 Blacks and 6,307 Whites. They represented a range of companies and job types, and the use of different interview formats. The study made some significant findings. First, interview structure reduces, but does not eliminate, race effects on interview ratings, and the behaviour description interview continues to be superior to other types of interview structure. Second, the size of race effects can be moderated by other factors. The two moderating factors identified in this meta-analytic review were job complexity and the relative sample size of minorities in the applicant pool. Third, biased interview evaluations can advantage minority over majority applicants. In this case, high job complexity resulted in Blacks and Hispanics being rated better than Whites.

Subsequent support for Huffcutt and Roth (1998) is mixed. Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003) conducted a large scale study that involved 708 interviewers and 12,203 applicants in one-on-one interviews in a college recruitment setting. Applicants were applying for jobs across seven job families in a manufacturing firm. 75% of the applicants were Whites, and the rest were Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and American Indians, and 5.4% were unknown. A highly structured interview was used. The significant conclusion of this study was that the highly structured interview would negate any race effect in interview evaluations.

Two relatively recent studies throw serious doubt on the conclusions drawn by Huffcutt and Roth (1998) and, Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003). McFarland, Ryan, Sacco and Kriska (2004) carried out a study exploring the effect of panel interviewers' and applicants' race on interviewer ratings. 1,334 applicants were applying for police officer roles, 81% of whom were Whites and 19% were Blacks. Three-member interviewing panels consisting of at least one White interviewer and one Black interviewer conducted the structured behavioural interviews. Significant same-race effects on interview ratings were found for both predominantly Black and White panels.

Buckley, et al. (2007) conducted a similar study that examined the effect of panel interviewers' and candidates' race on interview ratings but in the context of police officers applying for promotion. 10 Black and 10 White interviewers formed themselves into four-member panels to evaluate videotaped responses to a structured interview. Each interviewer rated all of the 36 White and 37 Black candidates. The results showed that the effect of same-race on interviewer ratings, although small, was present.

There are other studies that dispute the findings of Huffcutt and Roth (1998). In Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), 194 White interviewers drawn from a pool of undergraduate students were asked to evaluate simulated interview excerpts. Their evaluations showed that they discriminated between Black and White interviewees when making hiring recommendations for a peer-counseling program. In another study (Pulakos and Schmitt, 1995), 72 interviewers made performance predictions of air force officers made up of 464 participants, including White, Black, Hispanic and a minority of other ethnicities. The interviewers were found to discriminate among the White, Black and Hispanic interviewees in their performance ratings.

In a New Zealand study (Singer and Eder, 1989) based on fictitious interviews, 201 White New Zealand university students discriminated against the various Maori, Chinese, Dutch and White New Zealander ethnic groups when making selection decision ratings based on applicants' fitness for the job, competence, likeability and self-assurance. This was despite the interviewers rating ethnicity as unimportant in their decisions.

The above studies highlight the direct impact of interviewees' race and ethnicity on interviewers' performance predictions and selection decisions. Sometimes discrimination in interviewer evaluations varies from one racial group to another. In the third of a series of five studies by Motowidlo, et al. (1992), 875 applicants made up of Blacks, Whites, Hispanics, Asians and a minority of other ethnicities were rated on their leadership, interpersonal, problem-solving and communication skills by 19 interviewers made up of 17 full-time recruiters and two company psychologists. When comparing their evaluations against supervisory scores, company recruiters evaluated

Whites higher than both Blacks and Asians, but also rated the Blacks higher than the Asians, for entry-level management positions, and they evaluated Hispanics higher than Whites in management positions.

The subtle effects of race on interviewers are seen in a number of studies. In Frazer and Wiersma (2001), 88 White interviewers made up of undergraduate students read the paper qualifications of a Black or a White interviewee and then proceed to interview them. The interviewers made equal numbers of employment recommendations for the Black and White interviewees. However, a week after the interviews, the interviewers recalled that the White interviewees were more intelligent than the Black interviewees.

Dovidio and Gaertner (2000), mentioned above, showed that while White college students acting as interviewers do not discriminate in their hiring decisions for a peer-counseling program, this is only under the condition that the applicant is obviously good or poor. When the quality of the applicants is marginal, the study showed that interviewers discriminate between the two racial groups when making hiring decisions. In a separate but similar study (Mullins, 1978, 1982) with fictitious applicants applying for marketing representative positions, White university students acting as interviewers rated all good-quality interviewees highly, but rated poor Black interviewees better than poor White interviewees.

Studies show that while race and ethnicity have variable influences on the interviewer, they are at least able to consistently produce high reliability in the interview (Grove, 1981; Campion, Pursell and Brown, 1988; Motowidlo, et al., 1992). These just-mentioned studies – from the United States – will now be reviewed.

In Study 1, Motowidlo, et al. (1992) tested the reliability of a behavioural interview they had developed. They examined ratings made by 19 recruiters drawn from across six organisations. Ratings were made of 107 interviewees applying for entry-level management positions. They were made up of Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and five others of unknown race. The results found that when different interviewers interviewed the same interviewees on separate occasions, the structured behavioural interview is able to produce consistent outcomes regardless of who the interviewers are.

In Campion, Pursell and Brown (1988), a comprehensive structured interview was developed and subsequently used by various three-member interviewing panels consisting of two supervisors and one personnel representative. The panels interviewed 243 White and Black applicants applying for entry-level production roles. Of these, 149 were successfully employed. The study showed remarkably high inter-rater reliabilities in the evaluations of the applicants.

Grove (1981) conducted his research within six manufacturing plants where applicants were applying for manufacturing production work. Interviewers were two employment interviewers and 29 line managers who conducted a first and then a second interview with each of the 181 applicants, using a behaviourally consistent approach to decision making in the interview. The study showed that all the interviewers produced evaluations of the applicants that had comparable reliabilities across the Black and White racial groups.

As compared to studies that examine the effects of race on interviewer evaluations, there are fewer studies that examine the influence of race and ethnicity on interviewees. In a placement agency study, a Black interviewer and a White interviewer interviewed

75 Black interviewees (Ledvinka, 1971). The study found that the Black interviewees were more responsive to the Black interviewer than to the White interviewer. Black interviewees elaborated more (Ledvinka, 1971) and gave more reasons for their job losses (Ledvinka, 1971, 1973). Thus the interviewer's race affected interviewees' behaviour during the interview.

The subtlety of race effects on interviewees can be seen in a more recent study (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008) involving the assessments of 191 Black and White interviewees for promotions. Senior management of this public organisation was predominantly made up of Blacks. Black interviewees found the situational interview to be more job-related than White interviewees. Senior management may not have been involved in the interviews directly, but its Black-majority senior management acted as the organisational context that was influencing the perceptions of interviewees. Two important observations can be made here. First, organisational racial composition can influence the perceptions of interviewees. Second, both Black and White interviewees are susceptible to the influence of race in an employment interview.

Studies on interviewees' reactions to race effects in interviews are limited, but they point to definite influences. In particular, these influences are likely to impact on the interview processes rather than on the outcomes. Race effects appear to influence interviewers and interviewees in different ways.

Earlier studies on the employment interview have found a lack of evidence for the influence of race on outcomes (Blau, 1963; Rand and Wexley, 1975; Grove, 1981; Wing, 1981). Rand and Wexley (1975) produced the most convincing proof of a lack of influence of race on the interview. 160 White interviewers rated two simulated

candidates, a White and a Black. There was no difference in the ratings for both the candidates in terms of hiring recommendations and on six factors of interpersonal judgement. These factors were intelligence, current events, morality, adjustment, likeability and work-partner qualities. An important finding from this study, however, was the significant effect of race-similarity between the interviewer and interviewee as an influence on interviewer ratings.

In a study where interviewees were interviewed for promotion opportunities (Wing, 1981), three interviewers interviewed and rated Black and White interviewees. The results showed that there was no difference in the scoring of the 65 Black and White interviewees selected for promotion. However, out of the 65 interviewees, the top nine were Whites. A similar study published at the same time (Grove, 1981) was able to use a highly standardised behavioural interviewing approach in interviews, to obtain comparable results across different interviewers, made up of two employment interviewers and 29 line managers, assessing 181 Black and White applicants applying for beginning-level production work. It seems that these studies merely proved the reliability of the evaluation methods, but not a lack of race effects in the interview. It is also possible that structure contributed to the consistency of the evaluation methods, which in turn eliminated the influence of race.

Finally, Blau (1963) also found little support for the influence of race. He conducted a study in a placement agency and concluded that race does not influence the interview. There are reasons to be cautious about interpreting and generalising the findings of this study. First, interviewers in a placement agency have different objectives to their colleagues in recruitment and selection. The purpose of the employment interview is to place candidates into as many jobs as possible. Placement interviewers are therefore

motivated to place every interviewee into jobs, but recruitment and selection interviewers have the task of attracting and selecting the most suitable candidates. Placement interviewers are therefore unlikely to discriminate among interviewees, whatever their backgrounds. The second weakness of this study relates to its methodology. More specifically, the data and analytic technique of the study were not compatible with the type of data available for it (Sattler, 1970).

In sum, studies on race effects in an interview, even when the structured interview is used, are mixed. Where studies have shown a lack of the influence of race on employment interviews, they have pointed to a subtle influence in the form of race-similarity between the interviewer and interviewee. Unlike the validity studies on race effects, those that examine reliability are able to consistently support the use of highly structured behavioural interviews to promote high inter-rater reliability (Grove, 1981).

2.8.2. Race/ethnicity-similarity

The race-similarity factor is an extension of the race factor examined above. Like race effect studies, race-similarity studies can be examined from the perspective of their effects on the interviewer and on the interviewee. Evidence for race-similarity effects on interviewers is particularly strong (Rand and Wexley, 1975; Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). Further, there are differences in the findings in regard to particular cultural groups, the use of particular types of structured interview, and the racial compositions of the interview panel (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Field, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). These results add to the evidence for the subtle influence of race in the interview, and suggest

the use of strong interview structures and mixed-race panels to reduce the effects of race on outcomes, though they will not necessarily eliminate the effect. A significant finding is the relative importance of race-similarity over age and sex similarities in the employment interview (Goldberg, 2003). Overall, there is minimal evidence to dispute race-similarity effects in the interview.

As in the case of race-effect studies, there has only been minimal work undertaken to examine the effect of race-similarity on interviewees. Research into race and race-similarity effects on the interview is warranted. It can investigate the factors and processes that make race such a strong and salient, yet subtle, influence on the interview, even with the use of the highly popular structured interview.

The evidence for race-similarity effects on the employment interview is compelling (Rand and Wexley, 1975; Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). Six panels of four interviewers conducted situational interviews with 153 Black and White police officers applying for actual promotions. Depending on the racial composition of the panels, Black and White interviewers either rated interviewees of the same race higher, or all interviewers were biased in their ratings in favour of one group or the other (Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). The presence of race-similarity effects in this study was consistent with findings from two earlier studies. These are now described.

Lin, Dobbins and Farh (1992) examined three panels of two interviewers conducting structured interviews with 2,805 Whites, Blacks and Hispanics applying for custodian positions in a real setting. Varying levels of race-similarity effects on interviewer ratings with Blacks and Hispanics but not Whites were found. The levels of the effects

were dependent on the racial composition of the panels, the interviewees' race, and the type of interview structure used. Rand and Wexley (1975) used 160 White undergraduates acting as interviewers to rate fictitious interviews of a Black and a White candidate for job suitability as a mechanical-engineer technician. The results showed race-similarity effects on interviewer ratings.

The results from these studies are particularly strong, given that two of them are based on real interviews in actual work settings (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996), and all of them had large sample sizes. It is also significant to note that pains were taken in the two real interviews to conduct various forms of the structured interview, and yet the effects of race-similarity persisted, albeit in different strengths according to the type of structure used. This will be discussed further in the sub-section on structure in Section 2.8.4.

One study was found that examined the effect of interviewer-interviewee race-similarity on interviewees' perceptions (Goldberg, 2003). 44 Caucasian and African American recruiters were made up of human resource professionals and managers from a variety of organisations. 210 interviewees from three university career centres were Caucasians, African Americans, Asians and Hispanics. Their backgrounds were in computer information systems, finance and accounting. The results showed that race-similarity impacts significantly on the perceptions of interviewees about the recruiter, the job, and the organisation. A significant outcome of this study was that same-age and same-sex scenarios did not have a significant effect on these perceptions. Race-similarity was a more powerful influence than age-similarity and sex-similarity in the interviews.

A more recent study could potentially disprove the influence of race-similarity effects on the interview (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003). This was another massive study based in a college recruitment setting. It involved 708 interviewers and 12,203 candidates in one-on-one structured interviews for seven job types. Results from this study, however, need to be used carefully for two reasons. First, methodological issues of nested data structures and levels of analysis prevent the use of the findings in any conclusive way (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003; Macan, 2009). Second, the authors are merely suggesting the use of a highly structured interview to eliminate the influence of race-similarity on interview outcomes. However, the likely presence of race similarity effects, particularly on the interview process, remains.

2.8.3. Racial/ethnicity cues: accent, name

Ethnicity is an attribute of race (Stanfield II., 1994), so this group of factors is a natural extension of race and race-similarity studies. Ethnicity cues are factors that possibly point to the presence of ethnicity, that in turn likely impact upon an interview. Again, the literature is scanty but some strong findings have been found, particularly on the importance of accent in the job interview, because of the latter's direct and indirect effects. In the following section, 'accent' and 'name' refer to the fact that an accent or name is non-standard in relation to those of the host country. For example, a Canadian accent is standard in Canada but non-standard in Australia, and a Chinese name is standard in China, Taiwan or Singapore but not in Australia.

The evidence from the literature points to the strong influence of ethnic names acting as a cue to the ethnicity of the interviewee, which then influence interviewer judgements and decisions. A name acts as a cue to ethnicity and may or may not

disadvantage the interviewee, depending on accent. In fact, a name can be an advantage when the interviewee has no accent (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006). Unlike resume studies, that seem to show that a name is a disadvantage (Krysan and Lewis, 2005; Patriquin, 2007; Booth, Leigh and Varganova, 2009), in job interviews this is not necessarily so. A name is merely a cue to ethnicity, but accent is a cue and a direct influence on the job interview process. This belief in the power of the influence of accent on the job interview may be the reason why interviewees try to imitate the accent of interviewers (Willemyns, Gallois, Callan and Pittam, 1997).

As indicated above, ethnicity impacts on interview outcomes. This is despite the interviewers considering ethnicity to be unimportant in their selection decisions (Singer and Eder, 1989). 210 White New Zealand psychology students rated four ethnic groups consisting of Maori, Chinese, Dutch and White New Zealander applicants applying for positions of 'high status departmental manager' and 'low status filing clerk' in simulated interviews that focused on their ability to fit in, their competence, their likeability and their self-importance. Two concurrent findings were found. First, interviewers rated ethnicity as low in importance in their decision-making, but ethnicity impacted significantly on their decision outcomes. Second, interviewers rated accent as moderately important in their selection decisions, but accent was not significant for their decision outcomes. These findings suggest that interviewers may be using accent to legitimise their ethnic discrimination in selection decisions (Singer and Eder, 1989), i.e., accent may be a cue to an interviewee's ethnicity (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006).

Accent, however, may not necessarily be functioning as a cue to ethnicity, but may impact directly on interviewer decision outcomes (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda

100

and Hopper, 1979). A United States study (de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979) and a Canadian study (Kalin and Rayko, 1978) independently arrived at the identical conclusion that accent results in interviewees being judged less suitable for higher status jobs and more suitable for lower status jobs. These two studies were drawn from diverse samples of interviewers and candidates and provided strong evidence for their findings. In the United States study, the 67 interviewers drawn from large businesses were made up of 53 Caucasians, 10 Mexican Americans, two Blacks, one Italian and one Native American. They made hiring predictions based on simulated audio interviews with Mexican American candidates with varying degrees of accent, for the positions of supervisor, skilled technician and semi-skilled worker. In the Canadian study, 203 English-Canadian students acting as interviewers evaluated interviewees with standard English-Canadian and non-standard accents from Italy, Greece, Portugal, West Africa and Slovakia. Interviewers were evaluating the job suitability of the candidates for the positions of industrial plant cleaner, production assembler, industrial mechanic and foreman. Accent discriminates among candidates of different ethnic groups depending on job status.

The effects of accent acting as a cue and accent having a direct impact at the same time can be seen in their ability to produce variable interviewer outcomes when interacting with name. Segrest Purkiss, et al., (2006) used 212 management students acting as interviewers, where the group was made up of Caucasian, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander and other minorities. They made variable judgements and hiring decisions for the position of human resource manager, depending on an applicant's accent and name. Applicants were judged from most to least favourable in the following order: ethnic name with no accent; non-ethnic name with and without an Hispanic accent; and ethnic name with an Hispanic accent. The

findings suggest that when an applicant has an ethnic name, accent is important to the interviewer's decision. When the applicant has a non-ethnic name, accent is irrelevant to the interviewer's decision. In other words, name is a cue to the ethnicity of the applicant, and accent is a cue as well as having a direct impact.

Another observation is the different effects that interviewee accents can have on different ethnic groups of interviewers (Cargile, 1997). 97 Asian and American undergraduates acting as interviewers did not discriminate between accented and non-accented interviewees on judgements of employment suitability, status and dynamism for four different job statuses of courier, human resource associate, information systems trainee and assistant brand manager. However, the Asian interviewers did find accented interviewees less attractive in terms of affiliation. Like Singer and Eder (1989), this finding suggests that accent influences process but not outcomes.

Only one study was found to examine the impact of interviewer accent on interviewees. In an Australian study (Willemyns, Gallois, Callan and Pittam, 1997), 96 interviewees raised in Australia interviewed with an interviewer with a broad-Australian accent and an interviewer with a cultivated accent. Interviewees were found to copy the interviewer with the broad-Australian accent but not the interviewer with the cultivated-accent. The study makes the suggestion that interviewees may have accommodated the interviewer with the broad accent because they were able to, but did not accommodate the interviewer with the cultivated accent because they did not have the ability. This study did not explore the interviewers' evaluation of the interviewees. It can only be speculated that the ability of an

interviewee to speak without an accent can impact on the job interview process and outcomes.

No literature exists to disprove that ethnic cues of name and accent are relevant to the job interview. This lends extra weight to the findings in the literature that ethnicity cues influence job interviews. A significant observation made in this section of the literature review is that these studies include interviewers from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Further, it is also observed that ethnicity biases are not a one-way street. Interviewers of all ethnic groups appear to be influenced by differences between themselves and the interviewees. They can and seem to discriminate interviewees different to themselves.

2.8.4. Other factors: interview structure, job complexity, job status, interviewee quality, sample size and work values

The above so far shows that most studies indicate the influence of race/ethnicity, racial/ethnic-similarity and racial/ethnic cues on the job interview. A few do not, and the moderating factors of structure, candidate quality and interviewer prejudice have been suggested as factors which mitigate race effects in these instances. A review of other studies will reinforce the impression of the moderating influence of structure, and reveal new factors that can moderate the effects of race and ethnicity. These additional factors are job complexity, job status, interviewee quality, and minority sample size.

The complexity of the influence of race and ethnicity on the employment interview can be explained by the presence of various intervening factors in the interview. Structure can eliminate (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003), or moderate

103

(Huffcutt and Roth, 1998), or have no influence on race and race-similarity effects in the interview (Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). Where structure is able to moderate race effects, different types of interview will moderate race effects in different ways. For example, the situational panel interview is more influential than the conventional panel interview (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992). The panel interview as a component of structure (Champion, Palmer and Campion, 1997) does not always moderate race effects (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003). Where panel interviews are effective in mitigating race effects, this is conditional on the race and ethnicity of the sample groups (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992; Motowidlo, et al., 1992) and on job types (Motowidlo, et al., 1992). Different levels of job complexity influence interviewer evaluations differently for the different racial groups (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998). Job status influences interviewer evaluations of different racial groups in different ways (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979; Singer and Eder, 1989). The race of high quality interviewees has no influence on interviewer evaluations, but the race of low quality interviewees does have an influence (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992). The bigger the minority sample size, the greater the group differences (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998). Work values differ from country to country and selection criteria change accordingly (Hill and Birdseye, 1989; Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999).

Interview structure and panel composition

Campion, Palmer & Campion (1997) outlined 15 structural techniques to achieve job interview reliability and validity. These are: (1) basing the interview questions on job analysis; (2) asking each candidate the same questions; (3) minimising the use of prompting, follow-up questioning and elaboration on questions; (4) using questions

that ask for explanations or alternatives; (5) spending more time on interviews or asking more questions; (6) limiting the influence of ancillary information such as application forms and resumes; (7) disallowing candidate questioning until after all the interviewer questions have been asked; (8) using multiple ratings for each answer; (9) applying rating scales that are behaviourally anchored; (10) taking detailed notes; (11) using multiple interviewers; (12) using the same interviewer/s for all the candidates; (13) avoiding discussing candidates' answers until all the interviews have been conducted; (14) undertaking interviewing training; and (15) applying statistical predictions rather than relying on the personal judgements of interviewers.

The moderating influence of interview structure and panel composition on the effects of race and race-similarity on job interviews has mixed support. Findings range from the claim that one-on-one highly structured interviews effectively eliminate the influence of race-similarity effects on interview (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003) to the claim that situational panel interviews have no impact on it (Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). These include studies on interviewer evaluations, training predictions, reliability and panel interview studies. The following pages review these studies.

Structure can eliminate race and race-similarity effects (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003). Sacco and his associates studied 708 interviewers, and 12,203 interviewees in a college recruitment setting. These interviews were for seven job types in a large manufacturing firm. The job interviews used were considered highly structured and behaviour-based. The authors found that these one-on-one highly structured interviews negated race-similarity effects. This study complements and supports the meta-analytic findings of Huffcutt and Roth (1998) that showed high

structure negated the influence of racial group differences in interviewer evaluations. In this meta-analytic study of 31 studies involving 1,200 Hispanics, 4,169 Blacks and 6,307 Whites, it was shown that low-structure interviews produce higher group differences in interview ratings. Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003) and Huffcutt and Roth (1998) taken together suggest that structure can contribute to reducing racial bias in interviews used as a selection tool.

Different types of structure, however, influence the job interview to different degrees. A highly structured interview can negate the influence of race-similarity (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003). The situational panel interview, on the other hand, has a stronger moderating influence on interviewer evaluations than the conventional structured panel interview. In a study conducted by Lin, Dobbins and Farh (1992), 2,805 applicants consisting primarily of Whites, Blacks and Hispanics applied for custodian roles in a school district. Personnel specialists and supervisors conducted the interviews in pairs. The situational panel interview moderates the effects of race-similarities more than the conventional panel interview does. This suggests that the more structure there is, the less race effects there are in the evaluation, i.e., structure reduces bias. The authors further suggest that same-race effects are moderated by the use of mixed panels in interviews. A significant finding, however, was that the results seemed to show that this is only important for Blacks and Hispanics, but not Whites.

The mixed findings in Lin, Dobbins and Farh (1992) are also seen in another major study published at the same time. Motowidlo, et al. (1992) developed two structured behavioural interviews for use in an entry-level management role and a marketing role in eight telecommunication companies. In the first study, the structured behaviour interview used for management positions appeared to eliminate the influence of race

effects on interviewers' evaluations. In the second study, race effects were not present between Blacks and Whites but were significant between Hispanics and Whites. In the third study, Whites scored higher than Blacks and Whites outscored Asians by even more, but there was no difference between Whites and Hispanics. In the fourth study, there was no difference between Blacks and Whites. The significance of these studies is that while structure can moderate the influence of race, it may only operate effectively under specific conditions involving certain ethnic groups and job types.

Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis (1996) provided strong evidence for the resilience of race-similarity effects on job interviews despite the use of the situational panel interview. Furthermore, despite the suggestion that mixed-race panels will eliminate the influence of race-similarity (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992), the use of both balanced and unbalanced panels continues to produce race-similarity effects. 153 police officers were interviewed by interviewing panels made up of a psychologist and three officers. Balanced panels produced race-similarity rating effects, and unbalanced panels produced majority-race rating effects. In other words, panel interviewing, whether racially-balanced or racially-unbalanced, does not moderate the influence of race-similarity effects.

In sum, the evidence that structure, including the use of panel interviews, is able to moderate the influence of race and race-similarities is varied (Campion, Palmer and Campion, 1997; Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003). Structure can eliminate (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003), moderate (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998), or have no influence on race and race-similarity effects (Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). Where structure has influence, this is dependent on the interview type, the race and ethnicity of the samples, and the job type.

Job complexity

As mentioned earlier, Huffcutt and Roth (1998) found that job complexity influences racial group differences. Low job complexity results in higher group differences, low and medium-complexity jobs result in Whites receiving higher evaluations than Blacks and Hispanics, and high job complexity results in negative group differences where Blacks and Hispanics were evaluated higher than Whites. Different levels of job complexity influence interviewer evaluations differently for different racial groups.

Job status

It is important to understand the effects of job status because it affects competence, commencing salary and job satisfaction (Singer and Eder, 1989). In this New Zealand study, already described above in Section 2.8.3, job status was seen to have a significant effect on selection decisions. The study supported two earlier studies that were also described in Section 2.8.3 – Kalin and Rayko (1978) and de la Zerda and Hopper (1979) – where job status was impacted by accent. Accent determines if an interviewee is perceived to be suitable for a high status or a low status job. Both studies found that interviewees with accents were evaluated more favourably for low-status jobs and less favourably for high-status jobs.

Interviewee quality

Interviewee qualifications may be an influencing factor when structured interviews continue to produce same-race effects in panel interviews (Lin, Dobbins and Farh,

1992). These authors suggested that mixed-race panels would easily negate this influence; however, Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion (2002), in reviewing the literature, have suggested that candidate qualification may be the confounding factor. This is an echo of Mullins (1982), where 176 White interviewers rated high quality candidates high regardless of race, but Blacks were rated higher than Whites in the case of low quality candidates. The race of high quality candidates has no influence on interviewer evaluations, while the race of low quality candidates does.

Minority sample size

The effect of minority sample size was another discovery made by Huffcutt and Roth (1998), described above in Section 2.8.1. The bigger the minority sample size, the greater the group differences.

Work values

Work values are reflected in the selection criteria used to make decisions. The importance of 26 job selection attributes were rated by two sample groups made up of 63 employees from China and 56 employees from the United States (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999). Both sample groups were from the public and private sectors. The Chinese executives rated the top five desirable attributes to be motivation, initiative, company knowledge, leadership and loyalty. The American executives rated the top five desirable attributes to be motivation, initiative, enthusiasm, oral communication and disposition. The researchers made several observations about their findings. First, they noted that while there is overlap in the motivation and initiative factors, the overall impression is that the American executives gave more weight to attributes of a

more interpersonal nature – attributes reflecting their more social individuality. Second, while initiative was not a surprise finding in the American sample, given Americans' individualistic and competitive nature, it is difficult to understand the presence of this attribute in the Chinese sample. Two likely explanations were offered in this regard. The first related to the change in China from a more command to a more market-oriented economy. The second related to the changing focus of Chinese competitiveness from working to achieve group goals to achieving individual goals. How the researchers chose to interpret the motivation of the Chinese in this way is an interesting area for future research.

Desirable work values are easily translated into job selection criteria. Therefore different countries should have different selection criteria, and should weigh the same criteria differently when interviewing candidates (Hill and Birdseye, 1989). A survey was conducted in over 135 subsidiaries of 14 multinational corporations located in 45 countries. In selecting salespersons, overseas countries gave more weight to education. Furthermore, social class and ethnic and religious factors also had more influence on overseas hiring decisions.

The significance of these findings on work values as they relate to selection concerns the underlying factors that may be influencing processes in intercultural employment interviews. They provide likely explanations for the variable findings in the literature, including consistent small race effects. How these values influence interview outcomes and processes in other ways is unknown and warrants new research.

2.8.5. Summary of selection factors

This literature review of studies of intercultural employment interviews as a selection tool shows that the results of these studies are inconsistent. What this may show is the subtlety of the influence of race and ethnicity on interviews. This subtle influence may also help to explain the way the influence of intervening factors in interviews varies. Evidence for the influence of race on interviewers is mixed, but consistent in its effects on interviewees. The subtle influence of race is, however, highlighted (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001). Evidence for the influence of race/ethnicity similarities and ethnic cues of name and accent on interviews is very strong, in spite of the use of structured interviews (Lin, Dobbins and Farh, 1992; Prewett-Livingston, Feild, Veres III and Lewis, 1996). When no race and race-related effects are found, or when the effects are small or variable, moderating factors are found. These are the level of interview structure, the type of interview format, the level of interviewer prejudice (Mullins, 1982) and the quality of the candidate (Mullins, 1982; Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000). Other moderators that have been suggested are job status and job complexity (Huffcutt & Roth, 1998). Ethnic cues can have direct and indirect effects on an interview (Singer and Eder, 1989). Name and accent are ethnic cues to a person's ethnicity that can impact on an interview, and accent can also have a direct influence. There is a strong case for the influence of different work values from different countries on selection criteria. There is some evidence for the influence of organisational context on interviewee experiences in an interview (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008). Interviewee experiences are important as they impact on the interviewees' views and decisions about the interviewer, the job and the organisation (Goldberg, 2003).

Two gaps have been identified in this cohort of literature. First, there is a great need to

examine intercultural interviews in countries and cultures beyond the United States. In particular, an important gap was identified in the context of Australian employers and Chinese candidates in intercultural job selection interviews. Second, while the literature is unclear about the direct result of race on an interview, its findings for race-similarities and ethnic cues are strong. Some understanding of the discrepancies in these studies is shown in the literature exploring moderating influences. Investigating the different work values of different countries (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) and their different selection criteria (Hill and Birdseye, 1989) has illuminated underlying factors that show an alternative way of understanding the variable findings in the literature. This is particularly so for many of the studies that have produced small but persistent race effects. Small differences, even if not significant, are important because they could mean the difference between getting and not getting a job, especially when candidates are being ranked. Research in this direction is consistent with the call for work to go beyond trying to isolate factors in a cause and effect manner and to examine underlying factors such as attitudes and values (Harris, 1989; Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002). The next section will review and summarise the literature on this other cohort of work.

2.9.   Factors influencing intercultural interviews as a communication tool

This section reviews the literature in an attempt to understand some of the underlying factors that influence processes and outcomes in intercultural job employment interviews. This may provide insights into the varied findings of the macro-literature in regard to race effects in interviews.

Studies that explore job interviews as a communication tool are not new. An example

of research on communication noted by Mayfield (1964) are the decision-making studies conducted over a nine-year period at McGill University in Canada. These explored how interviewers reach their decisions from the information obtained in job interviews. Wright (1969) listed seven major findings from the McGill University studies as follows: (1) interviewers try to match interviewees to their stereotype of a good candidate; (2) interviewers establish biases early, and this influences their decisions; (3) interviewers are most influenced by unfavourable information; (4) interviewers look for evidence of their hypotheses; (5) interviewers differ in their empathy relationships; (6) interviewer decisions are influenced by how information is transmitted, i.e., piecemeal or simultaneously; and (7) experienced interviewers rank candidates in the same order but differ in acceptance cut-off point.

The above studies illustrate the micro-analytic and process-oriented characteristics of communication studies. While macro-analytic studies continue to dominate, particularly in the area of the intercultural employment interview, a few micro-analytic and process-oriented studies such as these have appeared sporadically. These will now be reviewed according to the interviewer and interviewee factors influencing intercultural employment interviews. Interviewer factors identified from these studies will be: cultural sensitivity, skill in eliciting information, knowledge of discrimination, and the use of vocal cues. Interviewee factors identified will be: behavioural styles, vocal factors, perceptions, and the use of personal referents. The influence of cultural values on the communication process will be examined separately because value factors can fall into either the interviewer or the interviewee categories.

2.9.1. Interviewer factors

The literature highlights three groups of interviewer factors that influence the communication process of the job interview. These are interviewers' cultural sensitivity, skill in eliciting information, and knowledge of discrimination. Each of these factors is important; however, the relationships between them are relatively unknown.

Cultural sensitivity

Interviewer cultural sensitivity is important for successful job interviewing. Two real job interviews in Australia, between a Caucasian Australian interviewer and an Algerian candidate, in one case, and an Indian candidate in another, illustrate the impact that this sensitivity can have on outcomes (Lim, Winter and Chan, 2006). Cultural sensitivity involves establishing rapport, trust and understanding so as to contribute to relaxing the candidate before proceeding to discussions about the job. This creates better access to the information that is required to make considered decisions.

Skill in eliciting information

In a case described in Ledvinka (1973), 40 Black job seekers were registering with a placement employment agency. This study showed that two Black interviewers, when compared to two White interviewers, elicited more information from the Black interviewees on the reasons for their job loss. Motowidlo, et al. (1992), mentioned earlier in Sections 2.8.1 and 2.8.4, found that an interviewer's skill in eliciting

information from interviewees influences judgements and decisions. Skilled

interviewers elicit more relevant information for making their evaluation. When

interviewees are effective in communicating what information is being sought by the

interviewer, this information becomes available to the interviewer for decision-making.

In this way, interviewer skill contributes indirectly to outcomes. This suggests that

interviewers of whatever racial group need to acquire the skill of eliciting information

from interviewees, whatever their background, if they are to be effective in their

evaluations and decisions.

Knowledge of discrimination

Knowledge of what constitutes discrimination is becoming increasingly important as

more and more candidates become aware of their legal rights. Unfortunately,

interviewers are often unaware of the implications of some of their questions (Neuson,

2007). That, however, does not stop some candidates from taking offence and feeling

discriminated against and taking legal action against the interviewer. Some questions

are illegal regardless of their relevance to the job (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner,

2004). Others are not illegal, but basing a hiring decision on the answers to those

questions could be deemed illegal by the courts (Feld, 1974; Neuson, 2007).

Questions that are not meant to be discriminatory but are perceived as such could also

result in charges of discrimination (Feld, 1974). Interviewers have the legal

responsibility to know what questions they can and cannot legally ask at an interview

(Liston, 1999).

Vocal cues

The reading of an interviewer's cues can present problems for applicants (Parsons and Liden, 1984). Vocal cues, identified as pitch, pitch variability, speech rate, pauses and amplitude variability, impact on evaluations (DeGroot and Motowidlo, 1999). For example, a Singaporean study (Lai and Wong, 2000) notes that while United States interviewers may expect a conversation between an interviewer and interviewee to be rapid, with very few silences in between, Chinese conversations are often marked by long silences. Interviewers may think that they have sent a signal to an applicant to talk, but such a signal can easily be missed, so that the Chinese candidate takes longer to respond. This can create the perception that the applicant is passive and hence affect the interviewer's evaluation. Vocal cues in this regard are an area for future investigation.

In sum, an interviewer's cultural sensitivity, skill in eliciting information, knowledge of discrimination, and use of vocal cues appear to be important in job interviews, for making good selection decisions and working within the rules of the law. Some understanding of how these interviewer characteristics influence the processes and outcomes of interviews can be seen in these articles. Furthermore, an interviewer's vocal cues can impact on an interviewee's performance, which in turn can influence the interviewer's perceptions of the candidate. In-depth research could investigate these processes further to understand the impact of these factors on the interviewer and candidates throughout the employment interview communication processes and on its outcomes.

2.9.2. Interviewee factors

Interviewee factors that influence job interview communication processes are behavioural factors and vocal factors. The literature shows the effects of two behavioural factors (passivity and modesty) and two vocal factors (articulation and pauses) that influence interviewer's evaluations and decisions. Additional factors are the related perceptions of interviewer competence and interview fairness, and also the use of personal versus professional referents.

Behavioural styles

A Singaporean study published in two separate articles examined 12 Singaporean undergraduate students taking part in a simulated competency-based job interview of between 12 to 15 minutes for entry-level positions (Lai and Wong, 2000; Wong and Lai, 2000). The interviewers were two experienced interviewers from American multinational corporations, and an American professor. The applicants were passive and relied on the interviewers to lead and direct the conversation, waiting for the interviewers' cues as to when to speak. The interviewers interpreted this behaviour as passive and were not impressed.

Another behavioural style found in the same study was the modesty that applicants showed towards their own abilities. When applicants are averse to self-assertion, interviewers view them as timid and lacking in confidence. This undermines the applicants' position when American interviewers are looking for assertiveness and confidence in their applicants. Two further observations emerged from this study. First, applicants who tried to portray confidence come across as boastful, and so they

too were disadvantaged in the interview. Second, although the applicants had been taught in lectures to be confident and assertive, they were unable to display these qualities at the interview. The researchers suggest that cultural behaviours are not easily acquired. Applicants require extensive training to be competent at intercultural job selection interviews.

Vocal factors

Nonverbal factors can be visual or vocal. Regardless of their relevance to job performance, nonverbal factors are important in interviews as they impact on interviewer evaluations (Parsons and Liden, 1984) and can result in candidates missing out on jobs (Hall, 1966). Parsons and Liden (1984) had eight White interviewers in a large amusement park evaluate 517 applicants immediately after a 10-minute interview. The results showed that two of the three vocal factors examined were strongly related to ratings on qualifications where Blacks are rated lower than Whites. These factors are articulation and proper pauses. Voice intensity is unimportant. While vocal factors of Blacks and Whites produced different interviewer evaluations of the applicant's qualifications, we are unsure as to the process of how this happens. This is an area for future research.

Perceptions

Two studies on interviewee perceptions offer some insight into the processes of culture in the job interview.

Interviewee perceptions of their job interview experiences are important because they

can influence their view of the organisation and impact on their decisions to work for a particular employer (Liden and Parsons, 1986). In Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer (2008), 187 candidates interviewed for promotion in a police department where senior management were largely African-Americans. The study found that African-American candidates perceived the situational interview to be more job-related than did the White candidates (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008). Interviewees' perceptions of interview fairness are influenced by organisational context.

These perceptions may, however, be the result of another perception. 422 primarily White and Black applicants were evaluated by eight White interviewers (Liden and Parsons, 1986). Black interviewees saw the interviewers as less competent, and this could in turn have resulted in interviewees perceiving the interview as unfair (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008).

Personal versus professional referents

The use of personal referents can influence interview outcomes. Examples of personal versus professional referents are: 'What a lovely family you have' versus 'What a great office'; 'My best friend recommended me to Senge' versus 'I have read Senge's work' (Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford, 2006). 62 recruiters from across corporate America assessed one of four make-believe candidates based on their resume and written work. The recruiters evaluated and made recommendations on whether the candidate should or should not have a second interview. Candidates were either American or Brazilian. Several observations can be made here. First, the use of personal referents disadvantaged American candidates over those Americans who did

not use personal referents. Second, there was no difference in outcome between Brazilians who used and those who did not use personal referents. Third, all Brazilians and Americans who used personal referents were disadvantaged. This study would suggest that no candidates should use personal referents in their interviews, not even for the purpose of building rapport.

Using personal referents can become problematic, as is seen in the Singaporean study just described (Lai and Wong, 2000; Wong and Lai, 2000). The use of personal referents in that study could be seen in the way some applicants brought their family into the conversation. Talking about family has implications for applicants. Firstly, they are not taking the opportunity to sell themselves; and secondly, they are giving irrelevant information to the interviewers. Irrelevant information impacts negatively on interviewers' decisions (Wright, 1969). This example raises two possibilities. First, both interviewers and interviewees may be unaware of the influence of culture in this behaviour, i.e., they are not culturally sensitive. Second, if they are aware of culture, interviewees may be unable to modify their behaviour, and interviewers may be unable to modify their expectations. Research needs to investigate two other possibilities: first, that interviewers and interviewees are culturally aware of the influence of culture but are unable to recognise this in the job interview communication and decision-making processes; and second, that interviewers are able to recognise the influence of culture but are unable to respond appropriately.

2.9.3. Cultural values

Like the perception studies, cultural values give insight into some of the processes happening in a job interview. With this third group of factors it was found that

cultural factors impact on the communication processes that in turn influence outcomes. Cultural values that are embedded in the communication process were examined in a study by Lai and Wong (2000) that has already been described above. As a qualitative study, it was proposed that cultural values do influence the process that then impacts on interviewer evaluations and decisions. The American values of individualism, independence and confidence are in conflict with the Asian values of respect for and deference to authority. Applicants' passivity, i.e., inability to initiate talk, contributes to unsuccessful interviews. Their tendency to hide behind the group, thereby failing to take the opportunity to talk about themselves, is seen as giving irrelevant information that disadvantages them. Finally, interviewers wrongly perceive applicants' modesty in talking about their abilities as an indication of timidity and a lack of confidence.

2.9.4. Summary of communication factors

Research that explores the job interview as a communication tool reveals some interesting influencing factors on processes and outcomes. The interviewer properties of cultural sensitivity, skill in eliciting information, and knowledge of discrimination are very important in the job interview to help make accurate decisions and avoid charges of discrimination. Interviewer vocal cues can confuse an interviewee when wrongly interpreted. Significant interviewee properties are behavioural passivity versus assertiveness; modesty versus boastfulness and being vocally articulate rather than prone to pauses. There are a lot of opportunities for misinterpretation revolving around these tendencies and misunderstanding can result, leading to unfavourable outcomes. Vocal cues from both interviewers and interviewees impact on other participants in an interview, with consequences for interviewer evaluations and outcomes. Interviewees'

perceptions of interviewers' competence is likely to influence perceptions of interview fairness. The use of personal referents can disadvantage candidates. Cultural values influence the behaviour of candidates, which can then impact on the decisions of interviewers, who might have different expectations and different interpretations of the relevant behavioural, vocal and cultural cues.

This cohort of literature offers some valuable insights into some of the cultural processes that can influence a job interview. It highlights, in particular, the potential for the different interpretations of cultural values by interviewers and candidates that can lead to candidates being disadvantaged in the interview. Different behavioural norms between cultures can also lead to misinterpretations of true intentions. These misinterpretations lead to misunderstandings that subsequently impact on the decisions and outcomes of the interview. Interpretations and misinterpretations on the part of both interviewers and candidates can be hidden features in an interview that have thus far gone unexplored in the literature.

Candidates' behavioural and vocal cues are susceptible to misinterpretation and misunderstanding. These can easily lead to unfavourable outcomes. Research needs to isolate these factors and examine them for their influence on the processes and the outcomes they can lead to. The use of personal referents raised two interesting possibilities for exploration; first, that interviewers and interviewees are aware of the influence of culture but are unable to recognise it in the job interview communication and decision-making processes, and second, that interviewers are able to recognise the influence of culture but are unable to respond appropriately when in the actual situation. Much of the research here is written from western perspectives, particularly the United States, and we understand more about how White interviewers are misinterpreting and

misunderstanding their interviewees. There is less literature on how well interviewees are reading and understanding the interviewers' questions and expectations, particularly in interviews between Australians and Chinese. This is a large area for research. Conducting research that investigates interviewers' and interviewees' simultaneous experiences and perspectives on the same issues here would answer many of these questions.

This area of literature extends our understanding of intercultural employment interviews by focusing on influences on the communication process and outcomes. While the selection studies are useful for highlighting the subtlety of the various influences on the intercultural interview reflected in the inconsistent and small effects due to race and the more definite influences of race similarity and ethnic cues, the communication studies have begun to illuminate what is happening in the underlying processes and outcomes. While interviewer factors that are influential are sensitivity, skill and knowledge, interviewee factors that are influential largely concern culture-bound behaviour, including vocal behaviour and subjective perceptions. Further research can extend this research and help formulate a theoretical framework to represent these influences on the interview process and outcomes.

2.10. Factors influencing intercultural interviews as a discrimination tool

This section reviews another part of the micro-analytic literature to further understand possible underlying mechanisms that are operating in the intercultural employment interview. Unlike the communication literature, however, this part of the literature is concerned with discriminatory mechanisms that influence employment interviews. It

also provides insights into other factors and mechanisms that impact upon the employment interview.

There are many terms associated with discrimination. These will now be defined, before we proceed to discuss the literature on discrimination and the employment interview.

Stereotype. This is a knowledge-structure or cognitive schema of prejudice common to members of a group – something that influences the group members' behaviour and causes them to interpret and understand each other's behaviour in particular ways (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006).

Prejudice. This is a bias or prejudgement, favourable or unfavourable, that has no factual basis (Allport, 1979, p.6). Racial prejudice is an "unfair negative attitude toward a social group or a person perceived to be a member of that group" (Dovidio, 2001).

Discrimination. This is an act, as opposed to prejudice, which is an attitude. Prejudice becomes discrimination when it translates into the unequal treatment of individuals who are the object of the prejudicial attitudes (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001). Employers' lack of motive or intention to discriminate in the context of employment is not a defence in the Australian courts (Hunyor, 2003).

"Discrimination is alive and well" (Krysan and Lewis, 2005).

Discrimination in the job interview does happen. This, despite some of the findings in the literature indicating effects that are inconsistent and small, possibly due to the subtle

nature of the influence of culture in the intercultural job interview (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000; Frazer and Wiersma, 2001; Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006). The 'Talk on Trial' report from the United Kingdom on 60 real interviews for basic roles found that interview practices were disadvantaging ethnic minorities despite the lack of overt discrimination in the interviewing process (Roberts and Campbell, 2006). The report described two examples of this covert discrimination; first, that the interviewee's work experiences from overseas are not valued, and second, that interviewers demand unnecessarily high levels of communication skill from ethnic minority interviewees.

The following pages review the literature in regard to racial attitudes (Stewart and Perlow, 2001), stereotyping (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979; Singer and Eder, 1989), social desirability (Lewis and Sherman, 2003), and social identity (Lewis and Sherman, 2003) that are commonly invoked to explain discrimination in an interview. This overview will also look at modern racism and schema theory, which has been used to explain some of the underlying processes in an intercultural employment interview.

2.10.1. Social desirability

'Social desirability' refers to the tendency for interviewers to favour a candidate of a particular race because it is socially desirable to do so. In Lewis and Sherman (2003), 60 undergraduates evaluated job applicants for their suitability as research assistants. The study showed that White selectors were pro-Black on subjective measures and pro-White on objective measures. The finding suggested that the White selectors' subjective measures mask their underlying negative stereotypes of Blacks because it is socially desirable to hide these negative stereotypes.

2.10.2. Social identity

In the same study (Lewis and Sherman, 2003), the researchers further found that Black selectors were pro-Black on subjective measures but when forced to choose, they were pro-White. The authors suggest that in-group favouritism led to them being pro-Black, but the threat to their own interests led to them being pro-White.

2.10.3. Racial attitudes

Stewart and Perlow (2001) conducted a resume study that examined candidates' race, job status and racial attitudes. The racial attitudes of 181 students were measured, and resumes of Black and White candidates of varying quality were presented. None of these factors impacted on hiring decisions; however, racial attitudes were found to influence the level of confidence that managers had in their choices of candidates for jobs typically associated with particular racial groups. Managers with a biased-toward-Black attitude were more confident in their choice of Black candidates for lower-status jobs. They were also more confident about their choice of White candidates for higher-status jobs.

2.10.4. Stereotyping

Stereotyping effects can be seen from studies where certain racial groups are regarded as suitable for certain jobs but not for others (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979; Singer and Eder, 1989). This stereotypical preference generally associates Whites with higher-status jobs and Blacks with lower-status jobs (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979). Singer and Eder (1989) highlight the

masking of stereotyping in the interview decision process by showing that job status and ethnicity influence decisions but accent does not, whereas interviewers stated that accent was important in their decisions but ethnicity was not. This suggests the possibility of denial of prejudicial attitudes or a harbouring of prejudicial attitudes in the subconscious.

2.10.5. Modern racism: modern ethnicity bias and aversive racism

Modern racism is a kind of racism that is implicitly and unconsciously practised by the perpetrator (McConahay, 1986). Two studies proposed that modern racism accounts for the subtle influence of racial/ethnic biases in job interviews.

Segrest Purkiss, et al. (2006) – described in Section 2.8.3 – found that an interviewees'ethnic name is a cue to ethnicity that triggers biases in interviewer judgements and evaluations. Accent has a stronger impact, acting as a cue and having a direct impact on interviewer evaluations. Modern ethnicity bias – one form of modern racism – is suggested as an explanation for this phenomenon, and the authors propose that the following process is at work. Prejudicial attitudes influence interviewer perceptions of applicants and it is suggested influence interviewer judgements and decisions (Rand and Wexley, 1975; Kalin and Rayko, 1978). While racial prejudice is an attitude, ethnicity stereotyping is its cognitive framework (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006). Racial prejudice and ethnicity stereotyping therefore go hand in hand (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson and Gaertner, 1996, p.307). The cognitive framework contains the beliefs that connect particular characteristics to particular groups of people (Ford and Stangor, 1992). These beliefs influence the interpretation of other's behaviour (Duncan, 1969), the memory of others (Stangor and McMillan, 1992), and behaviour toward

127

others (Snyder, Tanke and Berscheid, 1977). Prejudice evokes negative stereotypes, and the greater the prejudice the more negative the stereotypes (Kawakami, Dion and Dovidio, 1998). Cues elicit stereotypes (Kawakami, Dion and Dovidio, 1998) that influence judgements. Perceivers are typically unaware of this process of cues eliciting stereotypes to influence judgement. This is a characteristic of modern racism (McConahay, 1986). A stereotype can be elicited by more than one cue.

Dovidio and Gaertner (2000) conducted a 10-year study where 194 White interviewers reported on their racial prejudice and selection decisions. They were asked to evaluate simulated interview excerpts of a Black or a White candidate and to make hiring recommendations based on the candidates' qualifications. The study found that there was no discrimination shown towards the Black and White candidates provided their qualifications were clearly strong or weak. When qualifications were marginal, the White interviewers discriminated against the Blacks. The findings supported the authors' theory of aversive racism, another form of modern racism, to explain this phenomenon. The process of aversive racism is as follows. The assumption is that the racial attitudes of Whites purport to be egalitarian and not prejudiced. However, these Whites discriminate in subtle ways that can be rationalised. They unconsciously harbour negative feelings and beliefs about certain groups. These racial biases are expressed in indirect ways that enable them to continue believing they have egalitarian values. These biases are indirect in that they are not obvious and can be rationalised by reference to factors other than race.

2.10.6. Schema theory

Schema theory has been proposed to explain the subtle influence of culture in

intercultural employment interviews. Frazer and Wiersma (2001) describe a case in which 88 White interviewers in the United States interviewed a high or low quality Black or White applicant. The interviewers hired the applicants in equal proportions but one week later the interviewers remembered the White applicant as more intelligent. Recall was used as a measure of racial prejudice, i.e., recall was taken to indicate the interviewers' prejudicial attitudes.

The authors used schema theory to explain their findings, as follows. Schema theory assumes that as the perceiver receives bits and pieces of information, these are absorbed into a coherent cognitive structure called a schema. Ideas, beliefs, attitudes and attributions are therefore held together in this way and it influences new perceptions, memory, interpretations and judgements. When a particular incident is being recalled, that incident is filtered through the imperfectly formed schema, resulting in recall errors. In this study, racial prejudice is therefore deemed to be the negative schema of the perceiver.

2.10.7. Summary of discrimination factors

The job interview literature on discrimination reveals some new understandings of what may be going on in interviews. Discrimination is subtle and often manifest in the processes but not the outcomes. However, this does not mean that there is no discrimination, as is evidenced by the many of the courts' decisions in favour of plaintiffs (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004). Typically, explanations for discriminatory behaviour are seen in stereotyping, racial attitudes, social desirability and social identity theories. These are largely untested in the employment interview literature. However, racism theories have also been proposed, i.e., aversive racism and

modern ethnicity bias. These theories are also untested in the literature. Much discrimination is attributed to the subconscious, where it reveals itself in unintentional ways.

2.11. Proposed theory and conceptual framework

This section attempts to build a conceptual framework for representing the intercultural selection interview using the three cohorts of intercultural employment literature reviewed above. A conceptual model based on attribution theory will be proposed, as in the following illustration.

Figure 4: Conceptual model of intercultural selection interview

ANTECEDENTS Independent variables	ATTRIBUTIONS Mediating variables	CONSEQUENCES Dependent variables
Competency factors	Cultural factors	Selection interview outcomes
Personality factors	Attribution and bias factors	
Situational factors		
Demographics factors		
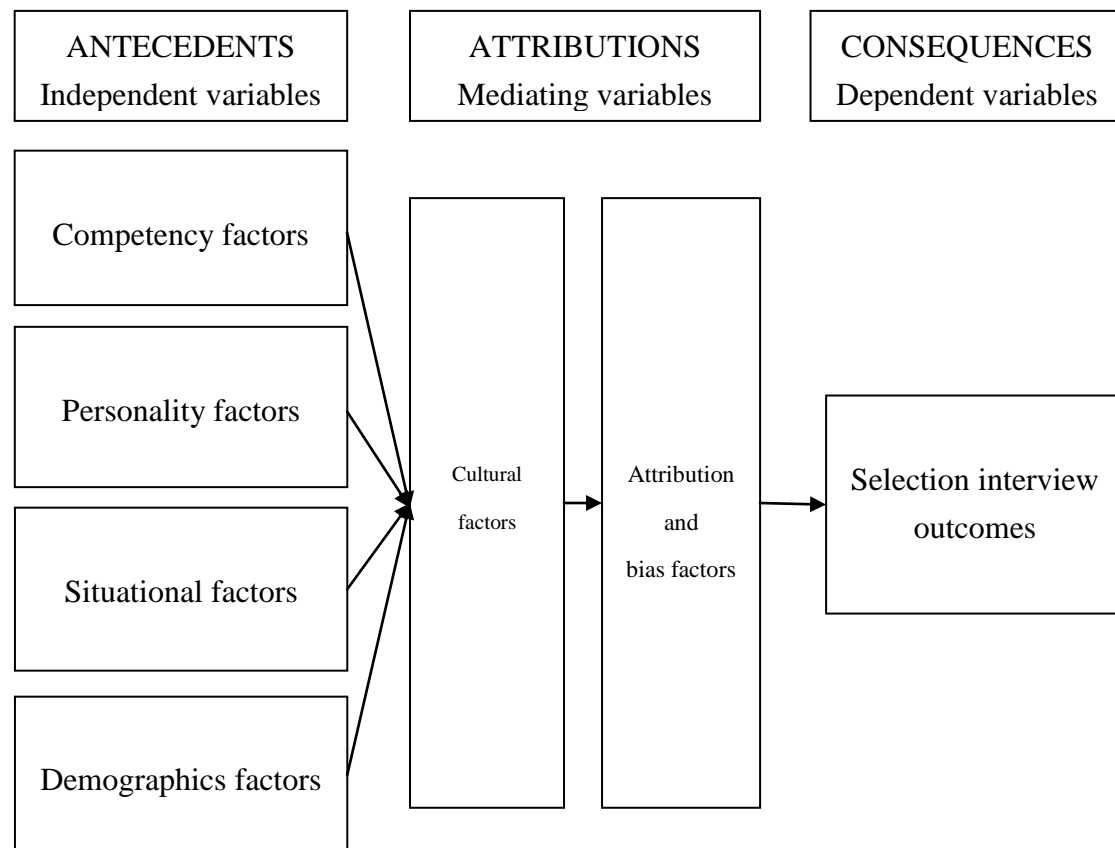
The proposed conceptual model suggests that competency, personality, situational and demographics categories of factors influence intercultural interview outcomes. Outcomes are defined as an interviewer's positive and negative evaluations of a candidate that ultimately determine the candidate's success or failure in getting the job. More recent literature suggests that in intercultural interviews, culture and bias mediate as opposed to moderate interview outcomes – a moderator affects the direction and strength of the predictor variable on outcomes but a mediator undergoes a transformation process to affect outcomes (Baron and Kenney, 1986). At this stage, attribution theory as applied to the intercultural interview has not yet been examined. Attribution theory is likely to be significant for selection interviews because the factors to which the interview outcome is attributed by interview participants, and particularly by the candidates, influence their motivation, emotions, and performance. Attribution to controllable factors, e.g., lack of effort, results in higher motivation and stronger performance (Weiner, 1985, 1995). Where the outcomes are negative, unexpected, or important, the tendency to search for causes increases (Weiner, 1985; Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009). Attribution theory therefore has a functional purpose in that it makes it possible to explain past events and to predict future behaviour (Jackson, Hall, Rowe and Daniels, 2009). Moreover, the selection interview is a high-risk event that can cause participants to search for reasons for their failure in the interview. Attribution theory provides the framework for how people view their performance in an interview and how to improve their chances of interviewing successfully. This model suggests that attribution factors have a mediating influence. This thesis will examine the influence of culture on attributions in intercultural selection interviews, and suggest a holistic model for representing the intercultural selection interview.

The literature illuminates the factors that make up each of the core categories of factors illustrated in the conceptual model. These factors are shown in Figure 5 below, and will be used as sensitising concepts for the data analysis by which data will be organised and described (Patton, 2002, p.439).

Figure 5: Factors influencing the intercultural selection interview

COMPETENCY	CULTURAL	PERSONALITY	SITUATIONAL	DEMOGRAPHICS
- Leadership (Motowidlo, et al., 1992) - Interpersonal skill (Motowidlo, et al., 1992) - Problem-solving skill (Motowidlo, et al., 1992) - Communication skill (Motowidlo, et al., 1992) - Company knowledge (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) - Intelligence (Rand & Wexley, 1975) - Knowledge of current events (Rand & Wexley, 1975)	- Race (Roberts and Campbell, 2006) - Ethnicity (Singer and Eder, 1989) - Name (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006) - Accent (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006) - Work values (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) - Vocal cues (Parsons and Liden, 1984) - Behavioural style (Wong and Lai, 2000) - Use of personal v	- Morality (Rand & Wexley, 1975) - Adjustment (Rand & Wexley, 1975) - Likeability (Rand & Wexley, 1975) - Dynamism (Cargile, 1997) - Loyalty (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) - Motivation (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) - Initiative (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) - Enthusiasm (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) - Disposition	- Interview structure (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003) - Interview panel cultural makeup (McFarland, Ryan, Sacco and Kriska, 2004) - Candidate quality (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000) - Minority group sample size (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998) - Job complexity	- Age (Goldberg, 2003) - Sex (Goldberg, 2003)

	professional referents (Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford, 2006) - Cultural values (Lai and Wong, 2000)	(Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999) - Modesty (Lai and Wong, 2000)	(Huffcutt and Roth, 1998) - Job status (Motowidlo, et al., 1992) - Cultural makeup of senior management (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008)	

The factors identified from the selection literature as influencing intercultural selection interviews are: (1) references that are discriminatory, (2) candidate quality, (3) interviewer prejudice, (4) work values: motivation, initiative, company knowledge, leadership, loyalty, enthusiasm, oral communication and disposition, (5) name, and (6) accent. The factors identified from the communication literature are: (1) cultural sensitivity: rapport, trust, understanding, ability to relax the candidate, (2) skill in eliciting information, (3) awareness of discrimination, (4) vocal cues: silences, passivity, (5) behavioural styles: respect, modesty, (6) perceptions of fairness, and (7) the use of personal/professional referents.

The factors identified from the discrimination literature are: (1) social desirability, (2) social identity, (3) racial attitudes, (4) stereotyping, (5) modern racism, and (6) schema theory. Factors related to interview outcomes are: (1) candidates making employment choices, (2) candidates making legal complaints, (3) a candidate's subjective reactions to the interview (perceptions on recruiter, job, organisation that

influences employment choices, and reputation of employer), (4) decisions to hire, refer or decline a candidate, (5) competence, and (6) starting salary.

From the above literature review, there appear to be two distinct groups of factors influencing the employment interview. One of these relates to the interviewer and the other to the candidate. The group relating to the interviewer consists of interviewer attributes, values, behaviour and outcomes. The diagram below summarises these factors.

Figure 6: Interviewer factors influencing the intercultural selection interview

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Interviewer attributes
- Cultural stereotyping (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001)
- Ethnicity stereotyping (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001)
- Ethnicity biases (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001)
- Racial prejudices (Mullins, 1982)
- Racial attitudes (Stewart and Perlow, 2001)
- Cultural sensitivity (Lim, Winter and Chan, 2006)
- Knowledge of discrimination (Neuson, 2007)
- Social desirability (Lewis and Sherman, 2003)
- Social identity (Lewis and Sherman, 2003)
- Schema theory (Frazer and Wiersma, 2001)
- Race (Cargile, 1997)

Interviewer values
- Motivation (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)
- Initiative (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)
- Company knowledge (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)
- Leadership (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)
- Loyalty (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)
- Enthusiasim (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)
- Oral communication (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)

- Disposition (Peppas, Peppas and Jin, 1999)

Interviewer behaviour
- Discrimination (Roberts and Campbell, 2006)
- Skill in eliciting information (Motowidlo, et al., 1992)
- Interviewing competence (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008)
- Vocal cues (Parsons and Liden, 1984)
- Accent (Willemyns, Gallois, Callam and Pittam, 1997)
- Modern racism (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006)

Interviewer outcomes
- Select fit (Kristof-Brown, 2000)
- Predict performance (Posthuman, Morgeson and Campion, 2002)
- Select candidate (Macan, 2009) for promotion (Buckley, et al., 2007) or recruitment (Motowidlo, et al., 1992)

The group of factors relating to the candidate, on the other hand, consists of two broad factors influencing interview outcomes. These factors are candidate attributes and behaviour. Candidate outcomes in the employment interview process are decisions to accept or decline an employment offer, making a complaint, and subjective reactions. The diagram below summarises these candidate factors.

Figure 7: Candidate factors influencing the intercultural selection interview

Candidate attributes
- Race (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000)
- Ethnicity (Singer and Eder, 1989)
- Interviewing self-efficacy (Tay, Ang and Van Dyne, 2006)
- Candidate quality (Dovidio and Gaertner, 2000)
- Name (Segrest Purkiss, et al., 2006)
- Accent (Segrest Purkiss et al., 2006)

Candidate behaviour
- Accent adaptation (Willemyns, Gallois, Callam and Pittam, 1997)
- Behavioural style (Wong and Lai, 2000)
- Vocal factors (Parsons and Liden, 1984)
- Perceptions (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008)
- Use of personal referents v professional referents (Heaphy, Sanchez-Burks and Ashford, 2006)

Candidate outcomes
- Making complaints (Hackett, Lapierre and Gardiner, 2004)
- Missing jobs (Hall, 1966)
- Seeing interview as unfair (Becton, Feild, Files and Jones-Farmer, 2008)

The factors in Figures 6 and 7 make up the core categories of factors in the conceptual framework in Figure 4. They highlight some significant similarities and differences in the factors related to the interviewer and candidate in intercultural employment interviews. Both interviewer and candidate attributes are important; however, these attributes differ in the case of interviewers and candidates. Both interviewers' and candidates' behaviour is also important, but again, the types of behaviour differ in each case. Interviewer values are highlighted in the literature. Candidate values have only been deduced by the researchers from the work of others (for example, Wong and Lai, 2000) and from personal knowledge (for example, Jensen, 2005). No research has set out to ask the candidates, what their values are and how these are impacting on employment interviews.

The interview outcomes for both interviewers and candidates are not significantly different in cases where the interviewer offers a job to the candidate and the candidate accepts the offer, or where the interviewer does not offer a job to the candidate and the candidate had no intention of accepting the job if it had been offered. For the interviewer, an offer is based on an assessment of the candidate's competency. This

also has an impact on the starting salary that will be offered. There are however other candidate outcomes in the interview that are unrelated to the offer/acceptance outcomes of interviewing. A candidate may decide to make a complaint against the interviewer if the candidate feels that there were discriminatory factors in the interview experience. This outcome can be driven by the candidate's subjective reactions. While an interviewer offer is supposedly based on an assessment of competency, influencing factors suggest there are also subjective factors involved in this process; for example, a candidate's name can result in an interviewer stereotyping the candidate. A candidate's subjective reaction can be similarly influenced; for example, the use of personal referents can influence an interviewer's assessment of the candidate.

In sum, there are distinct interviewer and candidate factors that influence intercultural employment interview outcomes. However, the processes whereby certain factors exert an influence are not clear. The central aim of this exploratory study is to examine these factors and outcomes, and the possible subjective and interpretive processes that result from cultural differences between interviewers and candidates.

2.12. Literature gaps

Many studies are based in the context of the United States and the United States culture. Many studies are simulated and not real. Many studies are quantitative and focused on specific factors that may influence the interview, i.e., they do not holistically explore the factors in the interview. Many studies explore either the view of the interviewer or candidate, but not both. Of the two studies that explored the interviewers' and candidates' perspectives, one is a linguistic study (Lipovsky, 2006)

and the other is based on examining the views of interviewers and candidates on candidates' impression management (Bilbow and Yeung, 1998). There is no study of Chinese candidates being interviewed by non-Chinese interviewers in Australia, where the views of interviewers and candidates are sought on how candidates are performing in the interview, and what factors candidates' performances are being attributed to. These are the gaps that are addressed by this thesis.

The contribution of this thesis to the literature is a holistic model of the intercultural selection interview that explores factors that influence intercultural interview outcomes. Outcomes are defined as the interviewers' positive and negative perceptions of candidates that ultimately determine candidates' success or failure in getting the job. More recent literature suggests that in the intercultural interview, culture mediates interview outcomes. Attribution theory has not yet been examined in the context of the intercultural interview. This study suggests that the culture and attributions of interviewers and candidates impact on selection interview outcomes. This thesis will determine that attribution is influenced by culture.

2.13. Research issues

This section summarises the research issues that have arisen from the literature review in this chapter. Three observations can be made. First, there have been many studies that use fictitious interviews. Second, many studies have been conducted and published in the United States. Third, there is a lack of theory and model building in the literature.

In many instances, research on the intercultural employment interview suffers from a

lack of access to real life sample materials. Despite the questionable validity of using 'paper' people (Gorman, Clover and Doherty, 1978) resulting in poor generalisability power (Barr and Hitt, 1986), most studies do not use real-life situations. Many are campus-based and/or laboratory studies using undergraduate students as interviewers or candidates. Sometimes real life materials are combined with simulated materials.

Are make-believe managers motivated to be politically correct in make-believe exercises? Would they have selected differently if they actually had to employ candidates with a view to working with them? In many instances, university students acting as managers do not have the requisite skills and attributes of more experienced managers in the workplace in interviewing and selection, and we can expect that this would impact on the validity of the data collected. There is room for more research on actual lived experiences of the job interview, such as this study will undertake.

North American, European and English researchers also seem to dominate the literature on research on the intercultural employment interview. Insofar as researchers themselves are cultural beings, they are also an inherent source of bias in research, and especially in intercultural research (Adler, 1983). This raises the problem of data contamination – prejudice in the way that information is interpreted, and how conclusions are drawn (Shah, 2004). The literature also shows a paucity of research on Chinese candidates in the Australian context. No study has been located that examines this in the particular context of the financial services industry.

There is a growing body of literature on the intercultural employment interview. However, research that builds theory and theoretical models to explain the varied

findings in the literature is scarce. Some existing theoretical explanations have been offered in the discrimination literature. This thesis offers an alternative to the discriminatory frameworks by building on the communication literature. A theoretical interpretations framework of the intercultural job selection interview will address the lack of theoretical work in the area (Liden and Parsons, 1986; Buzzanell, 2002).

Theory denotes a set of well-developed categories (for example, factors and concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological or other phenomenon. The statements of relationship explain who, what, when, where, why, how, and with what, in the process of the phenomenon. Once concepts are related through statements of relationship into an explanatory theoretical framework, the research findings move beyond conceptual ordering to theory. In this way, a theory usually is more than a set of findings; it offers an explanation of phenomena (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

In developing theory, this qualitative work hopes to explore fresh territories for quantitative research. Additionally, it hopes to explain some of the reasons underlying much of the findings that we now have in quantitative research (Burton and Steane, 2004, pp.138-158).

It was claimed in the early 1990s that research on the job interview had matured (Anderson, 1992). However, a specific area within this body of work that was still in its infancy at that time was the intercultural job interview (Harris, 1989). The intercultural job interview was first proposed as a worthy area of research in the late 1960's with the acknowledgement that

"Words do mean different things to different people and these shades of meaning vary within subcultures and between ethnic groups as does the relativity of word-meaning" (Wright Jr., 1969).

By around the turn of this century, it would appear that research in the intercultural employment interview had not advanced in any significant way (Hough and Oswald, 2000; Stewart and Perlow, 2001; Posthuma, Morgeson and Campion, 2002; Macan 2009) and the state of knowledge remains inadequate.

Early research on the intercultural job interview focused on the effect of demographics variables on the interview process and outcome. Mixed results encouraged the subsequent exploration of underlying factors of culture to try to explain this inconsistency. The evidence is now clear that culture impacts on the intercultural job interview. What is unclear is how this influence takes place. As researchers have started to focus on the impact that the underlying race variables can have on the intercultural job interview, there has also been a corresponding shift in research questions from whether culture impacts on the intercultural job interview to how that happens. To understand this, an examination of the job interview process is desirable.

This research will identify the influencing factors and their relative significance in the job interview, and seek to understand why and how these factors influence the job interview communication process and impact on its outcomes. It will do this by exploring the shared experiences of non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates,

focusing in particular on the processes of interpretation by interviewers and candidates. In this way, patterns of interaction between two culturally different groups of people will be established. Understanding the influences on the intercultural interview in this interpretive tradition is also central to developing practical interventions for the workplace (Daniels and DeWine, 1991; Bilbow and Yeung, 1998, Lipovsky, 2006).

This study rests on samples collected from the real world, draws on its supervisory team – not just as academic mentors but also as cultural informants in the study – and seeks to contribute to our knowledge of the intercultural job interview in the Australian marketplace. We will seek to understand the process that contributes to Chinese candidates' experiences of interviewing in a large financial institution in Australia.

2.14. Research questions

A successful interview must satisfy three conditions. It must have strong psychometric properties, must not be discriminatory, and must produce positive applicant reactions. Structured interviews, particularly behavioural interviews, are now highly predictive of job and training success (Schmidt and Hunter, 1998). However, the evidence from validity and reliability studies of the intercultural selection interview are not clear. Research on communication and discriminatory processes in the intercultural interview shows that race and ethnicity can influence the interview even when there is high validity and reliability. The intercultural interview process, in addition, is also susceptible to discriminatory practices, even if the outcomes are not. Further, there is no

evidence about how applicants are reacting to structure in the intercultural interview. This chapter raises the question of the efficacy of structure in the intercultural job selection interview. There is evidence to suggest that the structured interview, which has been developed in western cultural settings, may not generalise well to the intercultural selection interview. This research will seek to address the use of the structured interview in intercultural selection.

The literature review of the communication intercultural interview research suggests that there are alternative explanations to those offered by discrimination theorists to explain how race and ethnicity are influencing the interview. The literature review has proposed an attribution-based theory of the intercultural selection interview. In addition to the key research questions, the literature raised sub-research questions that are listed below.

Key Research Question 1:

   What are the various factors influencing structured behavioural description interview outcomes when non-Chinese interviewers interview Chinese candidates for entry level positions in a large financial services organisation in Australia?

Sub-research Question 1:

   Do the candidates' communication skills have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

Sub-research Question 2:

Do the candidate's knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

Sub-research Question 3:

Do cultural factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

Sub-research Question 4:

Do candidates' personality factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

Sub-research Question 5:

Do situational factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

Sub-research Question 6:

Do interviewing factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

Sub-research Question 7:

Do demographics factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

Key Research Question 2:

How does culture influence intercultural selection interview outcomes?

Key Research Question 3:

What is the influence of attributions on the perceptions of interviewers and candidates during the intercultural selection interview?

Key Research Question 4:

Is the structured behavioural description interview a suitable mode of selection involving Chinese candidates?

3. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY

This holistic study proceeds in two ways. First, it seeks to capture the factors in an interview that may influence interviewer perceptions of candidates. The literature suggests that there may be factors that are not job-relevant which are influencing interviewer decisions in regard to minority candidates (Kacmar, Wayne and Ratcliff, 1994). A holistic approach to the research process will enable these extraneous factors to be captured. Second, this study seeks to understand the experiences and understandings of the key actors in the interview, i.e., the interviewers and candidates. The methodology will be developed with these objectives in mind, i.e., the research problem will shape the research methods (Charmaz, 2006, p.15).

This study is conducted within one large Australian financial services organisation codenamed 'AFSO'. The period between the protracted process of identifying a suitable organisation to partner with the research and the time taken to collect all of the research data was two years and four months, between November 2007 and March 2010. Eight of the interviewers are third-generation Australians and four are first generation Australians. None are Chinese. All of the 11 candidates are Chinese, eight of whom are from China, with one each from Australia, Cambodia and Malaysia. All the data have been collected solely from various AFSO offices in the metropolitan city of Sydney where half of Australia's Chinese population lives (Ho, 2008).

3.1. Importance of using qualitative research in cross-cultural studies

Research can be quantitative or qualitative, and these are sometimes seen as opposing methods of conducting research. Quantitative research is concerned with testing theory and is underpinned by the notion that good research must produce findings that are statistically reliable and valid. Qualitative research aims to create or develop theories that can be tested by quantitative research. Hence, the focus of quantitative research method is on numbers, and the focus of qualitative research method is on words. Quantitative and qualitative approaches to research are "different ways of operationalising and measuring theoretical constructs and practical concepts" (Matveev, 2002, p. 1). They are not opposing but complementary ways of conducting research.

Quantitative research dominated the field of intercultural communication until the 1990's (Aneas and Sandin, 2009). This dominance extended to the area of the intercultural selection interview where there was a relative lack of qualitative literature on intercultural communication in the selection interview. In intercultural communication research, quantitative researchers are interested in the size of the impact that particular factors may have on the intercultural phenomenon; in contrast, qualitative researchers in the same field are interested in the presence or absence of the factors in the first instance (Matveev, 2002). Increasingly, qualitative research is seen as a relevant area of research, especially when studying a social phenomenon that is is not well understood (Alasuutari, 2010). The selection interview, along with culture and ethnicity, are social phenomena. There is still limited understanding of the influence of culture in the selection interview (Macan, 2009). This makes it important

147

to study intercultural communication in a selection interview by using a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research assumes an interpretive paradigm view of the world where social reality is created and sustained by the subjective experiences of people when in communication (Morgan, 1980). This means that the aims of qualitative research are (1) to study the texts and conversations of communication, (2) to study the interpretations that make the texts and conversations meaningful, and (3) to study the context and situation of the communication that influence the interpretation of the texts and conversations (Ting-Toomey, 1984). One of the main tasks of qualitative researchers is therefore to accurately capture and interpret the meanings of a phenomenon such as a selection interview as it occurs in its natural social context (Denzin, 1971; Van Maanen, 1983; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Marshall and Rossman, 1989; Fryer 1991). In the process, the capture of emerging factors and descriptions that are necessary to develop and formulate new theories is possible because of the interpretive and subjective nature of qualitative research.

Qualitative research requires that the researcher has a realistic grasp of the world (Matveev, 2002). Data collection, analysis and interpretation are flexible (Matveev, 2002). Departure from the original objectives of the research in response to the changing nature of the context (Cassell and Symon, 1994, pp.1-13) is accepted as part of the reality of the research. The researcher can develop new theoretical concepts from the descriptions based on the primary and unstructured data. The relative freedom of the research participants to express their stories and experiences (Kirk and Miller, 1986) as they choose provides an opportunity to capture a more holistic view of the phenomenon being investigated. In intercultural research, qualitative methods have the distinct

148

advantage of allowing the researcher to interact with the research participants on their own terms, thereby allowing possible cultural interpretations to emerge in the course of the research.

Critics of qualitative research argue that qualitative methods do not investigate the cause and effect of different research phenomena (Matveev, 2002). This is because the objective of qualitative research is not about investigating cause and effect; rather it is about exploring the presence or absence of factors relating to the phenomenon in question. Another criticism of qualitative research is that there are differences in the quality and quantity of information provided by the research participants (Matveev, 2002). It is argued here that the different quality and quantity of information raises the possibility of new concepts and theories that should be examined in further research.

3.2. Research paradigm - philosophical rationale of the research approach

Figure 8 and the sections below illustrate the philosophical rationale for the research approach for this PhD study, and the influence that this has on the research methods.

Figure 8: Philosophical rationale to research approach

	Qualitative		Quantitative
Ontology	Interpretivism		Realism
Epistemology	Etic	Emic	Etic
Inference method	Abduction	Induction	Deduction
Research objective	Develop theory	Create theory	Test theory
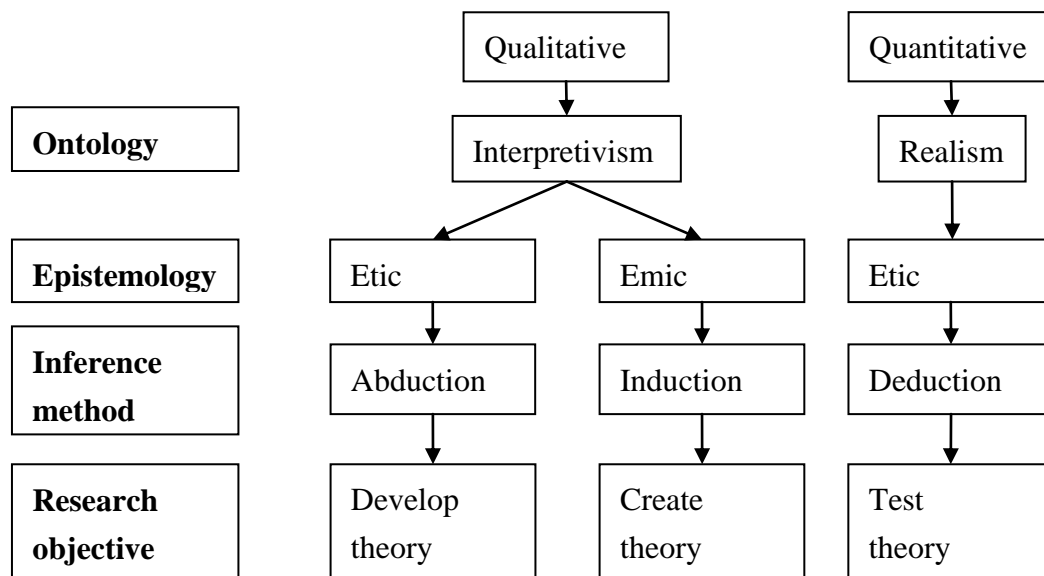
3.2.1. Ontology, interpretivism and epistemology

The three elements of a paradigm are ontology, epistemology and methodology (Healy and Perry, 2000). It is important for a researcher to be explicit about the research paradigm because of its implications for the research methodology. A paradigm is a set of beliefs or worldview that is accepted on faith (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.19). A research strategy and methodology are influenced by the researcher's paradigm, reflected in the researcher's ontology and epistemology, as well as the research questions, data collection opportunities, and analytical approach. While ontology grapples with what is real, epistemology defines the relationship between the researcher and the research. Together, ontology and epistemology influence the overall strategy towards the research, the research questions, and the data collection and analysis. Ontology is central to research strategy and methodology.

Ontology answers the question 'What is real?' 'Realists' assume that the truth is concrete, objective, measurable and external to the individual seeking it (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). On the other end of the spectrum, 'interpretivists' believe that truth is what is perceived in the external world (Morgan and Smircich, 1980). For interpretivism, therefore, truth is a subjective creation arising between the individual and the external world (Suddaby, 2006).

Interpretive theory has its roots in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which was later developed by other researchers (Daniels and DeWine, 1991). For example, Geertz (1975, pp.3-30), an anthropologist, used interpretive theory to explain how a group of people develop their own culture. Individual members of a cultural group experience their realities according to their own interpretations. These personal interpretations overlap through social interactions, that then result in the development of common understandings among the members. These common understandings make up the culture of the group, and are abstract, meaningful and implicitly understood by members of that particular cultural group (Brown, 2007) but not others. Over time, this developed culture becomes the frame of reference that makes the interpretation of specific events meaningful in particular ways.

Interpretive theory has two important implications for this research. First, the interviewer and candidate in the selection interview are each activating their own internal interpretive processes to understand each other. When the interviewer and candidate are from different backgrounds, their individual interpretive processes can produce different understandings of the same events. This is the interpretation phenomenon that is being investigated in this research. Second, the application of

151

interpretive theory to the selection interview suggests that the interaction process between the interviewer and candidate in an intercultural selection interview is social, symbolic, interactive and meaningful. Symbolic interactionism assumes that social processes are fundamental to meaningful human existence. 'Symbolic interactionism' is a phrase first used by Herbert Blumer in 1937 (Blumer, 1969, p.1). It is an approach developed for the study of human behaviour that has since been influenced by many other scholars such as George Herbert Mead (Patton, 2002, p.112) and John Dewey (Fine, 1993). A social process happens when people interact with one another in communication through the medium of language. It is the medium of language that allows participants in the social process to articulate what things mean to them. The focus is on reality as experienced and understood by the participants (Mancini, Hardiman and Lawson, 2005). This understanding of a social process illuminates the selection interview. In the selection interview, the interviewer and candidate are interacting and communicating with one another. In this study, they are using the English language as the common medium of communication to send and receive meaningful messages. These meanings, however, are determined by the individual subjective interpretations of the interviewer and candidate in the selection interview and therefore may or may not be mutually understood. Uncovering these differences can reveal the influence of culture in the intercultural selection interview.

It is noted that while interpretive theory describes the internal personal processes of how an individual make sense of things in the world, symbolic interactionism contends that things only make sense because of social interactions that allow them to have meanings, i.e., things are symbols of meanings. Interpretive theory is integral to symbolic interactionism because it makes it possible to explain how the personal meanings of things are created by social processes arising out of interactions between

individuals. Interpretive theory is central to understanding the dynamics and complexities of these processes (Harrison and McKinnon, 1999). Interpretive theory and symbolic interactionism provide the theoretical lenses through which we can view the social interactions (Foddy, 1993) comprising a selection interview. In particular, symbolic interactionism allows the research to explore and identify the common sets of symbols and understandings that give rise to the meanings of the interactions (Patton, 2002, p.112-113) between interviewer and candidate in a selection interview, and why these interactions may have a different meaning for each of them.

Interpretive ontology is particularly suited to research questions that seek to understand the influence of culture in an intercultural communication (Aneas and Sandin, 2009). In the intercultural communication process of a selection interview, the ability of the interviewer to understand the candidate's responses is influenced by (1) the cultural context of the candidate, and (2) the cultural context of the interviewer. To the extent that the two cultural contexts are different, the candidate's intended meaning in a response will be interpreted differently by the interviewer (Lai and Wong, 2000). Interpretive ontology suggests that the influence of culture can be researched by understanding the different interpretations of meaning made by the interviewer and candidate.

Ontology necessarily impacts on the epistemology of the research. Adopting the view that the selection interview is a social interaction (Macan, 2009) between the worlds of the individuals involved suggests that the appropriate ontology of the study is interpretivism. If the relationship between the interviewer and candidate in the selection interview is interpretive, it is logical that this must also be assumed for the

relationship between the researcher and the research participants, i.e., interviewer and candidate in the study. The epistemology of this study is driven by the researcher's interpretive ontology.

Epistemology is the nature of the relationship between the researcher and research participants (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.19). It follows from the interpretive ontology of reality that the epistemology of this research must assume that the social interaction between the researcher and the research participants is also interpretive and subjective. A qualitative research approach, including qualitative methods, is therefore adopted in this thesis, to yield qualitative data that are suitable for uncovering the interpretive ontological reality of the study (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Adopting an interpretive ontology and epistemology for this research is also important because the researcher is an integral part of the study (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). Especially in qualitative research, the researcher does not mechanically collect and analyse the data (Aneas and Sandin, 2009). Instead, she actively interacts with the research when she makes decisions about (1) what data to collect and how to collect them, (2) what sensitising concepts to use to guide the data analysis, (3) how to interpret the data and what inferences are to be derived from the interpretations, and (4) what evolving concepts should be selected in the process of developing a theory. Each of these decisions is influenced by the researcher's interpretive processes. An interpretive view of the world means that the researcher is a significant part of the study.

3.2.2. Etic and emic

The social nature of the interaction between the interviewer and candidate in an employment interview (Salgado and Moscoso, 2002; Macan, 2009) suggests the appropriateness of an interpretive ontology. The interpretive ontology of this research is both 'emic' and 'etic'. It is emic because an interpretive ontology entails that the social reality of interview participants is constructed from their individual internal subjective experiences (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Bhawuk and Triandis, 1996; Suddaby, 2006). As opposed to emic is the etic view where reality is external to the individual, and truth is objective and concrete (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Morgan and Smircich, 1980). This study is etic because of the researcher's background that is brought to bear on the study. The researcher is an ethnic Chinese who was born and raised in multicultural Malaysia, and has lived in New Zealand and Australia for 30 years. She has 20 years of work experience in the financial services industry as an employee and an external consultant. Her roles in the industry have included corporate finance executive, retail banking officer, agency recruiter and outplacement specialist. These backgrounds and experiences will influence the view of the researcher about her research. For this reason, an etic interpretive approach is central to this research.

There are three major ways in which the cultural and professional backgrounds of the researcher have contributed to this research. First, the researcher is intuitively able to appreciate many of the experiences of Chinese migrants looking for employment in Australia. This has arisen from her experience as an ethnic Chinese who has gone through the challenge, and is likely to continue to face the challenge, of being a member of an Asian minority looking for employment in Australia. This appreciation

is reinforced with insights gained from her role as an outplacement specialist, where many of her Chinese clients were actively looking for employment. Second, as an agency recruiter for a wide range of companies, this researcher is able to understand many of the challenges that interviewers in Australia, who tend to be non-Chinese, are confronted with when interviewing Chinese candidates. Third, the researcher has many years of work experience in the financial services industry in Sydney. This means that she has a ready and immediate network within the industry from which to seek onsite research opportunities for the thesis.

Emic and etic perspectives are particularly relevant to studies of culture. Emic research focuses on the 'native's point of view' and etic focuses on the researcher's point of view (Bhawuk and Triandis, 1996). Interpretive theory is central to this research, where the aim is to explore how the interviewer and candidate are interpreting and experiencing selection interviews. In other words, it is the emic view of the interviewer's and candidate's realities regarding the intercultural selection interview phenomenon that is the focus of this study. However, on the other hand, it is impossible for a researcher to be completely independent of his or her research. Researchers are part of what they study, not separate from it (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). This is particularly so in studies that involve intercultural interviewing of research participants (Shah, 2004; Aneas and Sandin, 2009). Interpretive theory and symbolic interactionism are central to the relationship between the researcher and the research participants, in the same way that they are central to the relationships among the research participants, i.e., the interviewers and candidates. This etic perspective towards the research is subject to the researcher's observations and critical analysis. Emic and etic perspectives are both important to this study. For the purpose of this research, it is supposed that emic and etic perspectives are complementary ways of

observing the same phenomenon. Simultaneously observing a phenomenon from the inside out (i.e., emic) and from the outside in (i.e., etic) is a valid way of doing research.

However, adopting a combined etic-emic research perspective presents a problem for this research. On the one hand, accepting that the researcher is an active participant in the research suggests that an etic view of the research is brought into play. On the other hand, when the researcher aims to understand the different interpretations of meaning of the interviewer and candidate, an emic view of the research is adopted. The interpretive ontology of this research suggests that the dual etic-emic view of the research is unavoidable. This presents a potential problem for the research. What part of it is an etic study, what part is an emic study, and how does the researcher deal with the dilemma? This is discussed further in Section 3.4.9.

3.3. Research design

Research design involves the research process beginning with identifying the organisational context for the study through to engaging the interviewers and candidates as participants in the study. Here the processes of the research design are explained and the steps taken to ensure the successful engagement of the research organisation and participants are highlighted.

3.3.1. Choosing the financial services industry and research organisation

The financial services industry was selected as the context for this research. The reasons were as follows. First, the financial services industry is one of the largest

industries in Australia. It employs a large number of workers, particularly for its retail networks. This research requires data that is potentially difficult to obtain because of the sensitivity and stress associated with the selection interview, particularly for the candidates. Accessing the large employment base of the financial services industry helped to increase the potential pool of participants for the study. Second, the financial services industry has strong appeal to the Chinese, and regardless of their chances of gaining employment in the industry, it is to be expected that there would be a large number of employment applications made. It is noted that many Chinese coming to Australia are relatively young and are studying at a university. Many of them hope to become residents and to be able to work in the country. These students are potential candidates for entry-level positions in organisations, including the financial service industry. Third, the researcher has been involved in the financial services industry in Australia for 12 years, resulting in a ready network to tap into for research support. These three reasons point to a greater chance of obtaining Chinese participants in the financial services industry for the study.

Criteria for identifying a partner organisation

Recruiting the partner organisation began with deciding on the criteria with which to assess the potential suitability of an organisation for the research. The identification of target organisations took into account the ability of the organisation to provide a sufficient number of live selection interviews and to attract interviewers and candidates – i.e., research participants – who meet the selection criteria. The right organisation has to meet the research need to gather enough selection interviews over a 12- to 18-month period. There need to be enough job vacancies in the organisation to generate a sufficient volume of selection interview opportunities during the

data-gathering period. This is to maximise the chances of obtaining enough participant consents to become involved with the research. Initially, the research targeted ethnic Australian interviewing managers who have day-to-day responsibilities for the successful candidates who are ethnic Chinese originating from China. The largest of the Australian financial services organisations were deemed to provide a good chance for gathering the required rich data and immediately became the primary target group.

Preparation for approaching a prospective partner organisation

Preparations prior to approaching prospective partner organisations include identifying organisations to target according to the criteria explained above, writing the project brief, including its benefits, and making a list of frequently asked questions. Understanding and overcoming objections is important if the researcher is to succeed in persuading an organisation to participate in the research. The key issues anticipated were (1) protecting the reputation of the organisation, (2) protecting the integrity of the selection employment process, and (3) protecting the privacy of the participants. Also, the interview is a high-stress event, particularly for the candidates, so the decision was made to audiotape rather than videotape the selection interviews (Takata, 2003, p.32) and subsequent debriefs. These were the preparations made prior to contacting the marketplace.

3.3.2. Recruiting an organisation as a research partner

In November 2007, two financial services organisations were approached at about the same time. Three reasons determined the choice of these two organisations. (1) Their

locations made the organisations accessible to the researcher. (2) These target organisations are reputed to have a diversity policy that is consistent with the research aim of improving communications across cultures in the workplace. (3) The culture of the leader influences the culture of the organisation. It was also noted that at the time of approaching the organisations that the chief executive officers of the two organisations were foreign-born. Therefore, it was anticipated that these two organisations might be more open to understanding the challenges of recruiting candidates from other cultures. By the end of the month, one organisation had declined to participate in the study, while the other had conditionally agreed to do so.

3.3.3. Negotiating the conditions of engagement and the ethics application

Permission to negotiate the conditions of engagement with the study was granted by the most senior human resource executive of AFSO. The task of negotiating the conditions of research was delegated to a human resource executive who reported directly to the senior executive. This negotiation took place between December 2007 and April 2008.

AFSO stipulated four conditions at the outset that needed to be met for the research to proceed. These were:

- Ensuring AFSO's confidentiality
- The Interview Protocol was to be approved by AFSO
- A copy of the research written up was to be given to AFSO
- Candidates were not to be contacted post the debrief interview.

AFSO and the ethics committee shared a common concern for the confidentiality of

the partner organisation. The researcher anticipated that this was to protect the organisation against any unintended research outcomes. Confidentiality was honoured by referring to the partner organisation as the Australian Financial Services Organisation (AFSO). The researcher gave AFSO further comfort by confirming the intent of the study, i.e., the uncovering of effective communication techniques in cross-cultural job interviews. It was stated further that discrimination and prejudice were not the focus of the research. Clarification of the intent of the research was made in writing as well as in a face-to-face meeting. These arrangements to protect the confidentiality of AFSO were deemed sufficient.

The Interview Protocol questions approved by AFSO appear in Appendix 2. This is a summarised version submitted to the ethics committee, as AFSO requested that it be provided in a short email. At the request of AFSO, a slight reordering of the questions occurred, before they were finally signed off by the senior human resource executive. The questions approved were later slightly reordered again to achieve a smoother flow in the debrief interviews with the research participants.

It was agreed that AFSO would receive a report of the research findings, with the completed PhD thesis made accessible in due course from the library. The offer to provide a maximum two-page tips sheet, titled 'Tips for cross-cultural interviewing', was also accepted as a deliverable. This was to be distributed to AFSO's human resource consultants, participating interviewing managers, and candidates. AFSO and the researcher were to work closely on the wording of the tips sheet to ensure that the integrity of the tips based on the findings were not compromised, and at the same time were aligned with the diversity policy of AFSO. Offering the tips sheet to the interviewing managers and candidates alike satisfied the ethics guideline of making

the findings equally available to all participants.

Unlike the first three conditions, the last condition – of not contacting the research candidates beyond the debrief interview – was simply not negotiable. Although it was not stated, the researcher believes that AFSO was particularly concerned, and rightly so, about its reputation as a fair employer. It was felt that limiting researcher-candidate access was one way of protecting the organisation.

At later discussions with the human resource consultants about the participant recruitment process, it became evident that data collection should not interfere with the actual job recruitment and selection process. There were three practical implications of this factor. First, obtaining consents from the interviewers and candidates to participate in the research was left to the organisation's human resource consultants, who were the points of contact between the interviewers and candidates. Second, data was to be available as and when the opportunity arose. And third, the interviews could only be captured on audiotapes.

The process that began with determining the selection criteria for assessing prospective partner organisations for the research to successfully engaging AFSO for this purpose required detailed planning, great care and sensitivity. While ethical guidelines and AFSO's conditions were largely consistent, it was necessary to work through minor disagreements. Taking an empathetic approach with AFSO meant that the research aim was made clear, and the differences between AFSO and the ethics committee, though sensitive, were relatively easy to resolve. While the conditions stipulated by AFSO have necessarily impacted on the research design and methodology, they have also added to its robustness. In satisfying the conditions of

162

AFSO and of the ethics committee, the highest possible standard of ethical research practice was implemented. Appendix 1 attached shows a copy of the ethics approval letter for the research to proceed.

This process was helped by the familiarity of the researcher with the industry, acquired in the course of a career spanning 20 years in Australia and New Zealand in banking, human resource consulting and cross-cultural communications training. The negotiation process was also aided by an earlier positive business relationship between the researcher and the HRE. Negotiation for access and agreeing on the data gathering process took four months.

3.3.4. Identifying the business area

The business area accessible for gathering data was at the discretion of AFSO. Two factors were taken into consideration. These were (1) the anticipated level of external recruitment activity by the business and (2) the availability of suitable human resource consultants (HRCs) to assist with engaging the research participants. The retail network was targeted because of its relatively constant recruitment need for entry-level positions to be filled throughout the year. The human resource executive approached the retail network recruitment manager, who agreed to the project and identified two HRCs suitable for the study. Each of the HRCs had responsibility for the recruitment needs of a specific Sydney region. Three months later, with no data becoming available from the retail network, the participant catchment areas were extended to business banking, IT and accounting. As with the study by Campion, Pursell and Brown (1988), this study examined entry-level positions across different job types within a single organisation.

3.3.5. Recruiting the stakeholders

Stakeholders in the research design were the human resource consultants, selection interviewing managers, and candidates. Detailing the procedure for recruiting the participants for the study was an integral part of the negotiation process with AFSO. The key consideration here was to protect the integrity of the employment process at all times. The present section describes the impact of this consideration on the participant recruitment procedure. It identifies the business area within AFSO designated to help with the research, the selection of the recruitment consultants who were to identify and engage participants for the study, and the briefing and training of the consultants on the procedures for gaining cooperation from the participants.

Meeting the initial consultants and training them for the participant recruitment process took place in May 2008. Having consulted and agreed with the human resource executive on the suitability of the retail network as a participant group, the executive organised for the researcher to meet with the recruitment manager and the two consultants. The objective was to explain the procedure for integrating the data-gathering process into the employment task with the aim of embedding this task within the employment process, in order to minimise potential interference and protect the integrity of the process.

The researcher was grateful for the helpful advice and accommodation provided by AFSO to enable the data collection to take place efficiently and effectively. During the course of this meeting, feedback from the RCs resulted in minimal changes being made to the procedure. The finalised participant recruitment procedure was

documented and emailed to the consultants, and copied to the manager and executive to keep everyone fully informed at all times. The attention given to engaging AFSO with the project was also given to engaging the consultants.

As part of their duties, the consultants visited the managers in their respective regions. This was quickly identified as an opportunity for the consultants to assess if the managers met the criteria for participation in the study. If the managers were deemed suitable, the consultants introduced them to the research as follows:

'A PhD student from Macquarie University has asked us to help her collect data for her research into the cross-cultural job interview. The project has the approval and support of Human Resources. Participation in the project will have nothing to do with our recruitment process and decision, nor with your interviewing ability. What will be collected is an audiotape of one job interview that you will be conducting. As soon as a decision is made on the job interview and the outcome communicated to all interested parties, you will be contacted to have a one-hour meeting with the student to talk about your experience of the job interview. We would appreciate it if you would participate in the study'.

The consultants then address any questions that the managers may have had in regard to the study. The consultants were guided by the FAQs prepared in advance by the researcher in collaboration with the consultants. Any question not in the FAQs was referred back to the researcher. Answers were fed back through the same channel. When a manager agreed to participate, he/she was emailed a copy of the 'Information and Consent Form – manager's copy' (Appendix 3). When an employment need arose

and a suitable candidate applied, the process continued.

The consultant received instruction from the manager to fill the role. The consultant prepared the job advertisement and posted it on the internet and/or newspapers as required. Applications were received via the internet. The consultant culled the applications and conducted 15-minute telephone interviews with the short-listed candidates. Candidates deemed suitable were immediately invited to a selection interview, or to attend an assessment centre that included a selection interview.

When a selection interview was being arranged, the consultant informed the candidate of the opportunity to participate in the research by using the following script: "Before you hang up, we have been asked by a PhD student from Macquarie University to help her collect some information for her research. Taking part in her research is completely voluntary and of course will have nothing to do with our recruitment process and decision. What will be collected is an audiotape of the job interview that you will be attending. As soon as we have made a decision on your job application and the outcome communicated to you, you will be contacted to have a one-hour meeting with the PhD student to talk about your experience of the job interview. Would you like to participate in the study?"

It was likely that the candidates would have questions to ask. The consultants were now familiar with the FAQs and had a copy of them handy by the telephone. Again, any question not covered in the FAQs was to be referred back to the researcher. If a candidate declined, the consultant said, "That's perfectly OK". If a candidate accepted, the consultant said, "That's great. I'll email you some information from the student. It is about the research and a consent form. When you arrive for your

interview, you will be asked to sign a copy and give it to the manager for the researcher's file".

The consultant informed the manager about the availability of the candidate for the selection interview. At this point, the consultant advised the manager of the candidate's participation and forwarded to the manager a brief on gathering the data.

The participant recruitment process was challenging from the beginning. An initial team of two consultants did not produce any participants for the interview in the first three months. This was partly due to the difficulty in gaining matching pairs of interviewers and candidates, and partly due to the resignation of one of the consultants, resulting in the other consultant being over-worked and giving the project no priority. The global economic meltdown of 2008/2009 contributed greatly to the challenges here.

Consulting with the human resource executive resulted in new business areas becoming involved in the research. In July 2008, the catchment was extended from the retail network to include business banking, IT and accounting. Candidates could be from any country of origin, so long as their parents were of Chinese descent. Australian interviewers were no longer restricted to those of White Anglo background but could include anyone who had resided in Australia since childhood and was not ethnic Chinese. Eventually 11 cases of selection interviews were captured between July 2008 and March 2010.

The process of organising meetings with the participants was extremely challenging. Interviewers were briefed for carrying out their roles in the research in meetings with

the researcher. However, most interviewers tried to renegotiate the lengths of the meetings from the original hour to half an hour. All except one of the candidates were unsuccessful in their applications, and this contributed greatly to their reluctance to complete the project. Except for C01, C07 and C10, all the others required several phone calls over several days and persistent persuasion to agree to meet. The place and time of all the debrief meetings were entirely at the discretion of the participants.

With time indicated as a major constraint, a few meetings were kept short. The main questions were always asked of each participant, but this left little time for elaboration where further probing would have been useful. However, in most of the cases, participants quickly became very comfortable and engaged with the conversations, and gave permission for the full interview to be conducted.

3.4.   Research methods of the study

Research methods include the data collection methods and techniques, preparation of the data for analysis, as well as the data analysis methods and tools. Data collection techniques include the preparation of the interview protocol to guide the researcher's debrief interviews with the selection interviewers and candidates. Data analysis methods include the use of the software, NVivo.

3.4.1. Data collection

Qualitative researchers in intercultural research are interested in the presence or absence of influencing factors (Matveev, 2002). Qualitative research is used to study relatively little known social pheonomena (Alasuutari, 2010). Selection interviews,

culture and ethnicity are social phenomena, and there is still limited understanding of the influence of culture on the selection interview (Macan, 2009). This makes it important to study intercultural communication in a selection interview by using a qualitative approach. The principal qualitative method used to gather data in this study was the interview, including live selection interviews and debrief interviews with interviewers and candidates. Debrief interviews allow the perceptions of the research participants to be captured, and this has been demonstrated in the study of intercultural interviews by Bilbow and Yeung (1998). For this thesis, all 11 cases of selection interviews, including the live selection interviews, debrief interviews with the interviewers, and debrief interviews with the candidates, were audiotaped and transcribed. The process of capturing these subjective qualitative data is outlined below.

When the interviewer and candidate in a particular selection interview verbally agreed to participate in the research, the consultant immediately notified the researcher with the details of the arrangement. On the day of the selection interview, the researcher arrived 15 minutes prior to the interview to set up the audiotape. The researcher then left the interview room and waited at reception until the conclusion of the interview. At this point, she immediately retrieved the audiotape, collected the consent forms and left.

The human resource executive had advised that all documents, e.g., resumes, were to be channelled through the consultant, for delivery to the researcher. Each document was immediately coded to protect the privacy of the participants. This also had the advantage of identifying all documents that relate to a particular participant. Identifying details such as names and contact details were deleted.

When the candidate had been informed of the outcome of the job application, the consultant advised the researcher that the hiring process was complete. The researcher then organised to meet with each of the participants for the follow-up debrief interviews. Candidates were informed of their job application outcomes by the consultants. The researcher was advised at the same time, and proceeded to arrange with the participants for their individual debrief meetings. Debrief interviews were held with the candidates first. These were held at the interviewer's place of work, or at the candidate's choice of a meeting location. A total of 11 candidate debriefs and 13 interviewer debriefs were captured on audiotape. Each of these individual debriefs is a data item and together they can be combined into data set or sets (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Using these definitions, this provided a total of 35 data items made up of three data sets consisting of the selection interviews, candidate debriefs, and interviewer debriefs. This produced rich data for qualitative analysis in 546 pages containing 27,144 single-spaced lines and 230,109 words.

Two types of data were collected on audiotape. The first type was the face-to-face intercultural selection interviews between the interviewers and candidates. The second type were the debrief interviews conducted by the researcher with each participant in the selection interviews. In the debrief interviews, the researcher was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol that was developed following the completion of the literature review and just prior to the start of data collection. Consistent with qualitative research, modifications were made to the interview protocol to clarify the emerging findings from the data as the research progressed.

In addition to the audiotapes, the researcher made field notes of each of the selection

170

interview or the debrief interview data collection events. These field notes described the events leading up to and surrounding the data collection experience. They included supplementary information that arose from conversations between the researcher and members of AFSO, and the researcher's observations, experiences and thoughts about the data collection. Another type of note made by the researcher were observation notes written about each selection interview and debrief interview that was transcribed from the audiotape. Observation notes contain the researcher's observations, thoughts and experiences of the event being transcribed. So, while field notes are focused on the data collection experience, observation notes are focused on the events that are of central interest to this research. 35 field notes and 25 observation notes were generated in this way.

3.4.2. Data availability

The 11 cases of live intercultural selection interviews became available over a period of two years and four months. The selection interviews in this research are a mix of one-on-one and panel interviews. A panel interview is an event whereby two or more interviewers in a single interview are involved in talking with the candidate and in making the employment decision (Roth and Campion, 1992). In this study, each interview was conducted by one or two interviewers. An interviewer was sometimes involved in more than one interview. Each case of a selection interview, therefore, was made up of three or four data items, i.e., the selection interview, the candidate debrief, and one or two interviewer debrief/s.

Figure 9: Summary of cases of live intercultural selection interviews

CASE	SELECTION INTERVIEW	INTERVIEWER	CANDIDATE
1	S01	MA, MB	C01
2	S02	MA, MB	C02
3	S03	MC	C03
4	S04	MC	C04
5	S05	MD, ME	C05
6	S06	MF	C06
7	S07	MG, MH	C07
8	S08	MI	C08
9	S09	MJ	C09
10	S10	MK, ML	C10
11	S11	ML, MM	C11

In total, 13 interviewers and 11 candidates were involved in the 11 selection interviews. Of the total number of 24 participants, only one – an interviewer – declined to participate in the debrief interviews. Each of the interviewers and candidates were debriefed once, except for one interviewer who was debriefed twice as he interviewed two of the candidates about 12 months apart. In total, there were 11 selection interviews, 12 interviewers, and 11 candidates who participated in the research; and 11 selection interview data items, 13 interviewer data items, and 11 candidate data items which were available for analysis.

The data collection experience in this research raised some issues that influenced the

research strategy. First, AFSO had only allowed for one-off debriefs with the candidates in the study. There was no opportunity to return to any of them for clarification, elaboration and confirmation of the emerging findings from the data analysis. This meant that there were some uncertainties about what the participants may have meant by certain things they said in the debrief interviews. To some extent, however, this limitation could be managed by exploring the lack of clarity with subsequent candidates. Second, data were collected as and when job openings, and hence selection interviews, became available, and suitable participants agreed to participate. This meant that sampling was not driven by the emerging findings in the data analysis but by the practicality of the data collection experience. In other words, theoretical sampling in this instance was not strictly purposive. The sampling strategy was one of convenience. These data collection experiences resulted in a systematic combining strategy approach to developing a case study of the intercultural selection interview.

The unpredictability of the data collection experience, the complexity of the phenomenon of culture in the selection interview, and a complete lack of understanding of cultural competence in the intercultural selection interviews were implications of the research strategy. Over a period of 20 months, 11 cases of intercultural selection interviews, 11 candidate debrief interviews and 13 interviewer debrief interviews were collected. In addition, 35 field notes and 35 observation notes were produced. A sample case, Case 6, consisting of three data items, is attached as Appendix 4. It is comprised of the selection interview, S06, the interviewer debrief, MF, and the candidate debrief, C06. In total, 105 separate data items containing rich data were available for analysis. Considering the circumstances of the data collection experience in particular, a suitable methodology for this study was the systematic

combining approach to developing a case study based on the abduction method of data analysis as outlined in Dubois and Gadde (2002).

3.4.3. The debrief interview questionnaire

Semi-structured interviews allow participants to freely inform the researcher of their own experiences but keep the interview focused on the research aim. To achieve the former objective, a series of interview questions were formulated to elicit responses that would illuminate the research questions. These responses must produce information that will lead to insights that the researcher does not already know (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p.66). To achieve the latter objective, the interview questionnaire was developed to help the debrief meetings stay on track.

Development of the interview questionnaire

The evolving nature of the questions in the interviews was consistent with qualitative research. The original interview questionnaire had two parts. The first part was focused on the general experiences of the participants that may or may not have included cultural factors. The second part was focused on the cultural aspects of the experiences. Cultural concepts emerging from earlier interviews were pursued in subsequent interviews by amending and/or framing new interviewing questions.

Companies are sensitive to this research topic. They do not want the research findings to highlight any behaviour in their organisations that may suggest prejudicial or discriminatory sentiments and behaviours. Repeated assurances were given to AFSO that the aim of the research was to help develop an intervention program for

interviewers and candidates in the intercultural selection interview. To give added comfort to AFSO, AFSO was invited to participate in the development of the initial key questions of the interview questionnaire. This had the benefit of ensuring that the questions were non-threatening to AFSO as well as to the participants. These questions are shown in Figure 10 below.

Figure 10: Research questions for interviewers and candidates

Questions for the researcher-interviewer interview:

1   When you left the interview, how did you feel it went?

2   What were your concerns before you conducted the interview?

3   What did you think was the role of the candidate in the interview?

4   What stood out for you about the interview?

5   What did the outcome of the interview mean to you?

6   Did you use the candidate online profile? In what way has that contributed to

        your decision?

7   Is there any question that I have not asked which I should have asked?

Questions for the researcher-candidate interview:

1   When you left the interview, how did you feel it went?

2   What were your concerns before you went to the interview?

3   What did you think was the role of the manager in the interview?

4   What stood out for you about the interview?

5   What did the outcome of the interview mean to you?

6   How did you feel about the environment in which the interview took place?

7   Is there any question that I have not asked which I should have asked?

In phrasing and ordering the questions, priority was given to developing and maintaining rapport and trust with the participants throughout the interview process. This priority is important in producing good qualitative interview data.

Development of the debrief questions

The interview questionnaire was made up of two parts. The first part asked questions around selection interview preparation, expectations and perceptions. The second part asked questions that explored the experience of culture in the selection interview. The rest of this section explains the development of the interview questions, beginning with the development of the questions for the interviewers and then for the candidates. The key questions agreed with AFSO are highlighted in bold. The section concludes with a discussion of the techniques prepared in advance to overcome any hesitations participants may have with the questions. The preliminary testing of the interview questionnaire is described at the end of the section.

Interview questionnaire: Part 1

The first part of the interview asked for the participants' experiences in a general way. Culture was not discussed unless mentioned by the candidate. The opening questions were friendly and open-ended. They immediately focused the meeting on the selection interview and at the same time allowed the participants to describe their personal and subjective experiences. These questions were:

- **When you left the interview, how did you feel it went?**
- When you read the candidate's resume, what went through your mind?

First impression matters in a selection interview. Hence the question was asked:

- What was your first impression of the candidate at the interview?

Twitchin (1990) suggests that there are two ways in which the selection interview can be confusing. First, there are different interpretations of what the right interview procedures are. Second, there are different expectations of what the selection interview outcomes should be. An understanding of interview outcomes and procedures is intricately related to the understanding of the purpose and roles of the participants in the interview. The following questions were designed to address these questions:

- **What were your concerns before you went to the interview?**
- Before the interview, what did you expect to happen at the interview?
- What preparation did you make for the interview?
- **What did you think was the role of the candidate in the interview?**
- What did you think the candidate expected of you?
- What did you think was your role at the interview?
- What did you expect the interview outcome to be?
- What did you think was the purpose of the interview?
- Did the interview achieve its purpose? How?
- Did the interview meet your expectations?

Communication was a key competency of the jobs that the candidates were applying for. The job descriptions of each of the positions that candidates were applying for in this research are described elsewhere. To gain insights into how the interviewers and candidates viewed communication and how they perceived each other's competency, the following were asked:

177

- How would you describe the way the candidate communicated with you?

- How do you like to communicate in an interview?

- What were the important things that you wanted to communicate in the interview? Did you communicate them? If not, why not?

- How did you feel about the questions that the candidate asked?

Perception of confidence has the strongest influence on the interviewer's impressions of a candidate (Lai and Wong 2000; Wong and Lai, 2000) and this is likely to impact on the process and outcome. Two questions were asked:

- How would you rate the candidate's confidence level in communicating with you during the interview? What could improve the rating?

- How would you rate your confidence level in communicating with the candidate? What could improve the rating?

Two further questions wrapped up the first part of the interview. These were:

- **What stood out for you about the interview?**

- Was the interview easy or hard? What helped or hindered?

- What could have been different about the interview to make it better for you?

Interview questionnaire: Part 2

Questions to explore culture were introduced in the second part of the interview. By this time, it was anticipated that participants would be reasonably relaxed. Nevertheless, great care continued to be taken, so each question of culture was asked in a sensitive way, and signs of participant discomfort were watched for. The following list of questions directly related to culture:

178

- How do you feel about interviewing someone from another culture?

- Were there any instances in the interview that you thought were cultural?

- Research tells us that cultural values can influence your experience in job interviews. Do you feel that this has impacted on your interview experience?

- Research tells us that work values are different for people from different cultures. What are some work values that are important to you?

- Research tells us that cultural cues such as race, accent and name can influence the experience of job interviews. Do you think this has influenced your experience of the interview?

- Research tells us that cultural stereotypes can influence the job interview. Do you think this has influenced your experience?

- How would you describe the Australian/your culture?

- How would you describe the Chinese/candidate's culture?

- What do you think culture is?

- What do you think are some ways people in an interview are different when their race, ethnicities and nationalities are different?

- What do you think an effective cross-cultural job interview look like?

To conclude the interview, interviewers were asked about their use of the online profiles and candidates were asked about the job interview environment. Both the interviewer and candidate interviews ended with an open invitation to participants for final comments.

- **What did the outcome of the interview mean to you?**

- **Did you use the candidate online profile? If yes, in what way has it contributed to your decision?**

- **Is there any question that I have not asked that I should ask?**

Amendments to the interview questionnaire for the candidates

The objective of the interview questionnaire was to guide the debrief meetings with the interviewers and candidates. The aim was to understand the differing interpretations of the interviewers and candidates in the selection interviews. Where possible, then, the interview questions for the interviewers and candidates mirrored each other. Two changes, however, must be noted. First, it was necessary to reverse the wording in the questions that arose from reversed perspectives. For example, 'What do you think was the role of the candidate in the interview?' became, 'What do you think was the role of the interviewer in the interview?' Second, it was necessary to remove the question, 'Did you use the candidate online profile? If yes, in what way has it contributed to your decision?' As requested by AFSO, this was replaced by 'How did you feel about the environment in which the interview took place?'

In theory, questions for the interviewers and candidates were kept in the same order for every interview so that responses obtained from every participant were comparable (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). In practise this was not always possible, as there may have been particular points in the conversation when it was appropriate to pursue an unplanned thought that was not necessarily next on the list in the interview questionnaire. In such instances, it was better to sacrifice protocol and take advantage of the unforseen opportunity in order to capture the rich data as and when they presented themselves.

Interview techniques to engage with participants

It was to be expected that some participants would be more articulate and/or forthcoming with their views than others. Interviewers could have been expected to be more so than the Chinese candidates because of the use of the English language in the interviews, the relative position of power of the interviewers, and the Australian environment in which this study was conducted. The following techniques could be used to respond to this eventuality.

Strategic positioning of questions

The researcher needed time to build rapport and trust with participants early in a meeting. The questions were arranged to achieve a smooth conversational flow, beginning with questions about the general experience of the interview and followed by ones related to culture. There needed to be some indication that the participants were comfortable before the meeting could proceed fruitfully into the second part.

Ratings

Ratings are a useful way to give participants the means to work with something more concrete. A rating question followed by further probing questions can lead to responses that contain rich data. For example, "How would you rate the candidate's confidence level in communicating with you during the interview?" This may be asked in another way, such as, "On a scale of one to 10, from very bad to very good, how would you rate the interview? What could improve the rating from seven to eight?"

"Tell me more"

This 'tell me more' technique is used when responses are brief and/or open ended. A passing comment may be followed up with "Tell me more", or "What do you mean by that?"

Minimals, pauses, silences and body language

Minimals such as 'uhu', 'mmm' and 'yea' tell a participant that they are being listened to. Pauses and silences are helpful particularly with Chinese candidates, who are used to more pauses and longer silences in everyday conversations. If read correctly, body language provides vital clues to how a participant may be feeling about the questions.

Cultural sensitivity

Questions must necessarily be asked in such a way as to ensure that participants understand the same question in the same way (Hussey and Hussey, 1997). However, cultural sensitivity dictates that the same questions must sometimes be amended so that comparable answers may be elicited from participants of different cultures. The essence of the meaning takes precedence over the actual wording of the questions. For example, "How would you describe the Australian culture?" can be used interchangeably with "How would you describe your culture?" when talking to an Australian. Similarly, "How would you describe your culture?" can be used interchangeably with "How would you describe the Chinese culture?" when talking to

a Chinese. The former appeals to the Australian sense of Hofstede's dimension of individualism and the latter to the Chinese sense of collectivism.

3.4.4. The validity and reliability of the interview questionnaire

Validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure (Cresswell, 2002) and reliability is the degree to which the instrument can replicate the results of a study (Obayashi, Bianchi and Song, 2003). The development of the questionnaire as described in Section 3.4.3 was guided by Gao (2005) who successfully obtained valid and reliable data from an in-depth qualitative interview guide. In this instance, the validity and reliability of the interview questionnaire were further tested (something which Gao did not do) with an experienced executive director of an international financial services organisation. Only minor amendments were made to the interview questionnaire to make it more user-friendly. For example, where two questions were very similar, one of them was dropped so as not to be repetitive. The first candidate debrief interview proved effective and efficient (27 August 2008). The first debrief interview with an interviewer proved likewise (10 September 2008). The interview protocol was valid and reliable, producing information that was required to answer the research questions.

This was an exploratory study of the intercultural selection interview. The sub-research questions sought to identify the factors that were subject to different interpretations by interviewers and candidates, and how these factors influenced the selection interview process and outcomes. The interview questionnaire was designed to elicit responses that would be the building blocks of the conceptual framework

representing culture and intercultural competence in the intercultural selection interview.

Considerable time, effort and care had been put into developing the interview questionnaire to ensure that participant experiences, including the culturally-derived meanings of those experiences, were available at the end of the interview. Experiences, meanings of experiences, behaviours, values and beliefs make up the answers to the participant interview questions, which in turn informed us about the research questions. They were the building blocks of the investigation and made up the conceptual elements for constructing the conceptual framework representing how the interviewers and candidates were experiencing the intercultural selection interview.

3.4.5. Data items

Qualitative research interviews captured on audiotape were transcribed so that the data became accessible for analysis. Audiotaping the interviews and ensuring their accurate transcription also had the added advantage of improving the reliability of the study (MacLean, Meyer and Estable, 2004). Interpretation was an integral part of the data transcription process because messages were encoded in both the 'what' and 'how' of the communication. Poland (2002) articulates four challenges in data transcription. First, the researcher can be challenged by the discrepancies between what is on the record and what is most likely to have been said. Second, data items can fail to indicate when research participants are mimicking or quoting others. Third, bits of data can be lost in the process of going forward and backward with the audiotape. Fourth, the transcriber can mistake words for other similar words.

Described below is the data transcription process undertaken in this study to overcome these challenges.

Each selection interview was captured on two audiotapes, carefully transcribed and checked twice. The researcher and a paid transcriber each took an audiotape. Selection interviews 01, 02, 10 and 11, and the debrief interviews with C01, C02, C10, C11, MK, ML, MM were transcribed by the researcher and checked by the transcriber. The rest of the interviews were prepared by the transcriber and checked by the researcher. Differences were discussed and resolved. This process improved the quality of the data transcription in two ways. First, the transcriber and the researcher were in agreement about what was captured on the audiotapes. Second, what was inaudible in one audiotape was often audible in the other audiotape. Seeking consensus in this way was not unlike seeking consensus throughout the data analysis process (Hill, et al., 2005).

At least a week after the data transcription, the researcher listened to the audiotape used by the transcriber and checked the data item a second time. More words and phrases previously indistinct became clearer and it was possible to eliminate more gaps in the earlier data items. Further, words that may have identified AFSO and/or participants were replaced by appropriate codes to preserve the privacy of the organisation, interviewers and candidates. Codes were also given to those who were associated with the research, e.g., the human resource executive, the human resource manager, and the consultants. It is also noted here that minimals (such as "ah ha" and "OK") and annotations, while useful in the selection interview data items, were a distraction and did not add value to the debrief data items. For ease of reading, these were eliminated or kept as exceptions where they illuminated a specific point. All

participants took the opportunity to view the data items just prior to the debrief meetings and were impressed with the detail and accuracy of the data transcriptions.

The task of preparing the data items for analysis was affected by the decision to use the software, NVivo, to assist in the data analysis process. Memoing, modelling and coding are characteristics of qualitative analysis, and NVivo possesses these tools to help in the analysis process. These qualitative tools of analysis will be discussed separately. For now, it is noted that the formatting and layout of the data items in Microsoft Word affect how NVivo may best be utilised. For example, the use of headings in Microsoft Word for the speakers (i.e., the researcher, interviewers and candidates) gave clarity by separating the speakers and their associated utterances from each other.

3.4.6. Memos

Memos serve several functions and this study utilised memos for three purposes. At the start of this project, a journal memo was created to capture and record the researcher's strategy for approaching the data analysis process, and the experiences of the process itself. This included the decisions made in regard to the use of qualitative software, the difficulty experienced in theoretical sampling creating the need for convenience sampling, and when data saturation was achieved. A source document memo was also created for each of the data items collected, i.e., the selection interview data item, the candidate debrief interview data item, and the interviewer debrief data item. Source document memos are the researcher's records of the data collection experiences in the case of each selection interview. As opposed to the journal memo, which provides a broad overview of the research process, source

document memos contain information that is specific to the individual cases. Code memos are records of the data analytic process and include decisions concerning the organisation of the data, the selection of data for coding, and the labelling of codes. They contain information about what the data are saying and the concepts to be abstracted from them. These critical memos document the evidence of the qualitative codes that eventually forms the backbone of the conceptual framework of the study.

3.4.7. Coding

Audiotape materials were transcribed onto Microsoft Word documents, formatted accordingly, entered into NVivo, and coded according to the induction and abduction methods of analysis. Each case was coded, analysed and verified, one at a time. The output from this task of induction and abduction, assisted by NVivo, was the identification of patterns, ideas, hypotheses, categories of information, theoretical elements, and new concepts, as evidenced by the data.

In the early stage of the open coding process, the reading of the data items involved noting anything that was interesting in relation to how the candidates were being perceived by the interviewer, candidate and researcher. Coding interesting observations is central to qualitative analysis. While the interesting data were coded, thoughts about why the data were interesting, and why they were interesting in relation to the research questions, were noted in memos. These thoughts about the interesting data were abductively inferred. Where appropriate, each perception was also analysed and coded according to whether the researcher, interviewer and candidate had attributed the perception as internal or external. At this stage,

interesting materials that were not perceptions were also coded, as these could later turn out to be related to some of the perceptions and/or attributions.

Key to coding the data was the questioning of the data items around the research questions. These questions were as follows:

1. What positive and negative perceptions are made of the candidates by the researcher (abductively inferred from the selection interviews), by the interviewers (inductively inferred from the interviewer debriefs), and by the candidates (inductively inferred from the candidate debriefs). Induction and abduction belong to the interpretivism ontology. Inferences made from these approaches are theoretical and so both their aims are to build theory. The difference between induction and abduction is explain by Peirce as follows: "induction shows that something actually is operative; Abduction ... suggests that something may be" (Gold, Walton, Cureton and Anderson (2011). Put another way, abduction is a "plausible belief" as suggested by Walton (Gold, Walton, Cureton and Anderson, 2011) that makes theoretical guesses to explain a collection of surprising facts (Dew, 2007).

2. Are these positive and negative perceptions attributed to factors that are internal or external to the candidates?

3. What are these internal and external factors that are related to the positive and negative perceptions?

4. How do these factors differ between interviewers and candidates?

5. How do interviewers and candidates experience, understand and explain the influence of culture in the interview?

Coding of Selection Interview 01 took eight hours over three sessions. Before going

188

to the next document, the codes were reviewed, descriptions for selected nodes were made, particularly those in relation to perceptions and attributions, and codes which appeared more frequently than others.

3.4.8. Modelling

Modelling is a way of representing ideas in diagrammatical form. Modelling, or diagramming as it has been known, is a tool of qualitative analysis that can assist in the evolutionary process of formulating a conceptual model. Modelling captures the big picture of the concepts and conceptual framework right from the start of the analytic process. As each evolving concept is being developed, new ones formed, and weak concepts discarded, modelling keeps track of what is being discovered by the data. Modelling is therefore a continuous process of diagramming and re-diagramming to reflect the emerging evidence from the data on the nature of the phenomenon being examined.

3.4.9. Induction, abduction and reflexivity

The combined emic and etic epistemology of this study was supported by using induction and abduction inference methods of analysing the data. Specifically, the data sets made up of the interviewers' and candidates' debrief interviews were inductively analysed with regard to the research participants' experiences, and the selection interviews data set was abductively analysed from the researcher's perspective. The inferences derived from the emic-focused induction analysis and the etic-focused abduction analysis produced findings from multiple perspectives that could be effectively triangulated to increases the robustness of the findings.

Induction aims to develop concepts, insights and understandings about a social phenomenon from holistically observing and inferring the meanings of the research participants' experiences. An induction approach systematically analyses qualitative data from a number of strategically selected cases (Johnson, 2004). The analysis is carried out in accordance with the research objective of understanding the cause or causes of a particular subjective phenomenon. Inductive analysis requires the researcher to undertake a detailed reading and interpretation of the data from which concepts, factors, and/or a model can be derived (Thomas, 2006). In this way, inductive analysis is consistent with the grounded theory of Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.12) whereby theory emerges from the data. The end result is that in inductive analysis, "patterns, factors, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis" (Patton, 1980, p.306).

In this thesis, a general inductive approach advocated by Thomas (2006) was adopted for the study, whereby the qualitative data were summarised, relationships were established between the research questions and the data, and a conceptual framework of the phenomenon was built from evidence in the data. Such an approach is common in cross-cultural business research, such as in Brand and Slater (2003) who interviewed Australian managers with a Chinese background to gain insights into their business ethics experiences in China.

Abduction, also referred to as retroduction by Pierce, is "reasoning from consequent to antecedent" (Peirce, 1966). It starts with the observation of a surprising fact (the consequent) and then makes an inference about the antecedent such that, if it were

true, the consequent would ensue. In other words, a hypothesis is created from the observed consequent to explain that consequent. If the explanation is true, the surprising fact – the consequent – should now appear as a matter of course, i.e., it should no longer be surprising. The existence of the antecedent has now been established, in virtue of its power to explain the consequent.

An example from the research data illustrates the reasoning technique of abduction. The candidate's response, below, was in reply to the interviewer's question regarding the candidate's motivation for applying to AFSO.

> *'ur actually first, I was graduated from Macquarie University [MF: yep] and my major was accounting study [MF: yes] so basically it's related to commerce. And my dream job also to go to the bank to work [MF: yeah?] yeah. And actually I found the opportunity, AFSO is hiring for someone to doing the customer service [MF: yep] which is relate to my current job, cause I'm working in the telecommunication company, which is the 3G dealer [MF: yep] so, everyday my job is like face to face to the customer like, so customer service job I think I got the, quite a bit skills to doing this, so like customer service [MF: yep] yeah, and ...' (Case 6, S06, 8-16)*

The surprising observation was that the candidate, apart from saying that it was her dream to work for a bank, largely did not answer the question. One of the hypotheses created from this observation was: 'The candidate did not understand the question'. It is possible to create more than one hypothesis from an observation. So, another hypothesis from this same observation was: 'The candidate is overly eager to sell herself for the role'.

So far, the researcher's etic view was apparent. The researcher made the observation and hypothesised about the observation. Peirce is clear that at this stage; the

hypothesis is 'on probation', i.e., there is reason to suppose that the hypothesis is true but it is not yet certain that it is true. Another way of summarising this point is that abduction is about making theoretical guesses to explain a collection of surprising facts (Dew, 2007). One way to 'test' the hypothesis is to reflect on the patterns of assumptions made by the participants about the hypothesis. In other words, the researcher develops support for her etic hypothesis from the emic interpretations and meanings of research participants. If the etic and emic views do not agree, the hypothesis can be modified for further 'testing', or even discarded. If the etic and emic views hang together, support for the hypothesis is strengthened. By combining the techniques of abduction and reflexivity, the etic and emic viewpoints become complementary views of the research.

Despite being a well-established approach, abduction, in scientific research, has been overshadowed by the two better-known approaches of deductive and inductive reasoning. Yet, abduction is a source of 'new ideas' that precedes inductive reasoning, and so can lead to fresh explanations of phenomena (Gold, Walton, Cureton and Anderson, 2011). While a growing group of qualitative researchers are advocating the use of abduction to reinforce the distinction between qualitative research (to formulate theories), and quantitative research (to test theories) (Jensen, 2002), abductive qualitative research is also distinct from inductive qualitative research.

Peirce in 1898 explained the different reasoning processes of abduction, induction and deduction (Jensen, 2002). For Peirce, an inference has three parts: a rule, a case and a result. Deduction begins with a rule (i.e., an hypothesis) that will be tested by the case and the result (i.e., observation). The hypothesis is true if the case and result necessarily follow; it is false if the case and result do not follow. In contrast, induction

is interested in what rule (i.e., hypothesis) can be formulated from the case and the observation of the case. Abduction is similar to induction in that the rule (i.e., an hypothesis) is derived from the observation; however, the difference is in the case. In induction, the case is established first. The result is then derived from the case, based on which the hypothesis is created. In abduction, the result is established first, and the hypothesis is derived from the observation. From the hypothesis, a case is created. The example below, taken from Peirce, highlights how the three parts of an inference process are placed differently in deductive, inductive and abductive reasoning.

Deduction:

Rule: All the beans from this bag are white.

Case: These beans are from this bag.

Result: These beans are white.

Induction:

Case: These beans are from this bag.

Result: These beans are white.

Rule: All the beans from this bag are white.

Abduction:

Result: These beans are white.

Rule: All the beans from this bag are white.

Case: These beans are from this bag.

The processes of abduction, induction and deduction therefore have different end objectives. Abduction and induction aim to build theory while deduction tests theory.

The implication of these different aims mean that valid inferences can be made from deduction only; inferences from induction and abduction are theoretical. As Pierce (1903) puts it, "deduction proves that something must be, induction shows that something actually is operative, abduction ... suggests that something may be". While hypothesis-making is the end result of the induction process, the purpose of hypothesis making in abduction is to explain what is observed and to build a case based on the hypothesis. Abduction is therefore particularly suitable for research that aims to create a case. In this way, the speculative nature of abduction enables the discovery of new knowledge.

Unlike Peirce, Blaikie (2000, pp.114-119) makes a distinction between abduction and retroduction. Abductive researchers assume that social reality is what the research participants are experiencing. Moreover, the abductive researcher is engaged in the interpretivist reality of the situation by perceiving that which is surprising and speculating on the likely explanation of the surprising fact. Speculating in abduction is an "inspired guess" (Dew, 2007). Most importantly, for Blaikie, the focus of abduction is on 'the meanings and interpretations, the motives and intentions, that people use in their everyday lives and which direct their behaviour' (Blaikie, 2007, p.90), which distinguishes it from deduction and induction (Gold, Walton, Cureton and Anderson, 2011). For this reason, abduction is particularly suited for research on culture and communication, such as the intercultural selection interview. Retroduction is based on a realist ontology and abduction is based on an interpretivist ontology (Blaikie, 2000, pp.114-119).

Blaikie's process of the researcher immersing themselves in the research has two dangers: losing contact with prior research, and losing contact with established

concepts. Chamberlain (2006) suggests that these dangers can be overcome by adhering to Peirce's process of abduction, making selective use of Blumer's sensitising concepts, and making selective use of interpretive abduction. In practice, this means identifying where there is a lack of a clear conceptual basis, applying externally-driven theory in a minimal way as sensitising concepts to cue and organise the research data, testing the imported concept in the research situation by examining the consistency, coherence and plausibility of its effects on observations, and proceeding to data coding. This process ensures that the researcher is grounded in data and anchored in theory, a process that is seen in other qualitative approaches such as grounded theory (Bowen, 2006).

Another important aspect of qualitative research is reflexivity (Cassell and Symon, 2004, p.6). Reflexivity is the act of a participant thinking through and articulating their interpretation of the events leading to an action of theirs, and establishing the meaning of the action itself (Knoblauch, 2001). It is particularly useful in qualitative research that aims to explore the influence of diversity factors on interpretations (Aneas and Sandin, 2009), especially where race is involved (Dunbar, Rodriguez and Parker, 2002). Understanding the interpretations of participants and reflecting on the emerging patterns of assumptions underlying their behaviour can eventually lead to diversity factors becoming explicit. These diversity factors can include culture. Culture is a socially constructed phenomenon. A particular challenge in the qualitative research of culture is to ascertain how culture can reveal itself in the study of intercultural communication such as a selection interview. The reflexivity technique can help make culture in the selection interview visible.

3.4.10. Abduction in Human Resource Development research

Theory building is important in the HRD field; although the process of abductive reasoning has been unrecognised, practitioners in this field have used it over a long period of time (Gold, Walton, Cureton and Anderson, 2011). Theorising about 'something that may be' is a frequent act in the real world where practitioners often cannot wait for deductively inferred information to become available before making decisions. Neither do they always rely on inductively inferred information based on information produced by others. Practitioners, particularly managers, must make decisions upon which they act. These decisions are based on abductively inferred theories.

Abduction is useful for solving "wicked problems" (Gold, Walton, Cureton and Anderson, 2011), characterised by requiring novel ways of doing things, involving multiple stakeholders with different perspectives, and requiring change. This makes abduction particularly suitable for Human Resource Development research. Examples cited in Gold, Walton, Cureton and Anderson (2011) of real daily workplace situations attest to the flourishing practice of abducting abstract conceptualisations. New possibilities, i.e., theories, are produced when managers meet with staff to brainstorm ideas for new initiatives in the workplace, or to solve difficult problems. The experiential learning model of planning, teaching and learning is embedded in the idea of abstract conceptualisation, without which there would be no deep learning. While we are not denigrating the importance of deductive-inductive reasoning in management practice, abductive reasoning is a pragmatic phenomenon in the workplace.

This PhD study explores the phenomenon of the intercultural selection interview,

where abduction is a daily activity of many managers who must interview and select candidates for new positions and/or promotions. Resumes can provide comprehensive information about a candidate, but interviewers still rely on the interview to extract further information from the candidate before making employment decisions. While some deductive and inductive processes are likely to be taking place here, abductive processes are likely to be the most prevalent.

3.4.11. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is foundational to qualitative research, and is a useful and flexible approach to qualitative data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Its flexibility lies in its applicability to a range of theoretical and epistemological leanings capable of producing rich, detailed and complex research outcomes, so as to identify, analyse and report factors in the data. Flexibility is also seen in the way that data organisation is kept to a minimum. Thematic analysis gives the researcher the option to report on the data sets, or to report on factors across the data sets.

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis is a generic coding process in qualitative research as well as a qualitative method in its own right. As a generic coding process, thematic analysis allows for factors, i.e., patterns, to emerge from an interview or across a data set (Bowen, 2006). This is the classic bottom-up inductive thematic analysis method. In thematic analysis, it is also permissible to code data from the top-down, based on the researcher's research interest. This is an alternative theoretical thematic analysis method where the use of known factors from prior research acts as concepts in data analysis. In thematic analysis, the prevalence of data for a particular factor or theme does not mean the theme is important. Prevalence is

what is often referred to as "thick description" (Bazeley, 2009). Instead, a factor or theme must have relevance and contribute to the research question.

The following outlines the six phases of thematic analysis advocated in Braun and Clarke (2006).

1. Getting familiar with the data: transcribing data, reading and re-reading a text, noting initial ideas.

2. Generating initial codes: systematic coding of interesting observations in the data, collating data around each code.

3. Searching for factors: collating codes into factors, gathering data relevant to potential factors.

4. Reviewing factors: checking whether factors fit coded extracts and data sets, generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

5. Defining and naming factors: ongoing analysis to refine each theme and produce an emerging overall story.

6. Producing a report: selection of vivid extracts, final analysis of selected extracts, relating analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

3.4.12. Systematic combining

The experience of the empirical fieldwork in data collection for this study reflected the massive uncertainty surrounding organisational life in the 21st century. An unexpected significant world event that impacted on AFSO during this phase of the research was the global financial crisis (GFC) that reached its peak in 2009. Although Australia was the only developed country in the world that did not go into recession,

like many industries and companies throughout the world, Australian businesses were affected by the GFC. In the course of the data collection period between July 2008 and March 2010, the researcher witnessed significant staff changes taking place in AFSO. By the end of the data collection period, the senior human resource executive, the human resource executive, and the original consultants who were involved in this research project were no longer working in their roles. These events were not exclusively linked to the GFC. The staff turnover reflected the economic uncertainty created by the GFC, and this had an impact on the empirical fieldwork experience of this research study.

The GFC had an immediate practical impact on the research. The research became protracted when the data collection took longer than the intended 12 months. The high staff turnover at AFSO meant that the researcher had to continuously engage, motivate and obtain buy-in from the staff at all levels to commit to the project. This and the retraining of new consultants were time-consuming. In total, the researcher had contact with the senior executive, two executives, three managers, and seven consultants, to obtain 11 cases of selection interviews from November 2007 to March 2010. The first two cases became available three months after the sign-off and training of the first group of consultants on how to engage and recruit the interviewing managers and candidates to participate in the research. After the first two cases became available, intermittent long breaks were experienced in collecting the rest of the cases. In the end, the period between sign-off and the last case took two years and four months. The GFC made the data collection more complicated and protracted. Persistent and constant contact was required to achieve enough data saturation to eventually complete the study.

The difficulty that was experienced from the start of the data collection period in obtaining suitable cases of selection interviews led to the rethinking of what data could be deemed suitable for the research. The ethnicities of the participants had to be refocused. Instead of recruiting only White Australian interviewers, the data collection became focused on non-ethnic Chinese interviewers. Instead of sampling ethnic Chinese candidates from China, the sample became focused on ethnic Chinese candidates from anywhere in Asia and Australia. Instead of sampling only interviewing managers who would become responsible for the successful candidates, the study now included interviewing managers, human resource consultants, and managers interviewing on behalf of other managers. Instead of sampling one-on-one interviews only, a mixture of one-on-one and two-panel interviews was collected. Instead of behavior interviews only, a mixture of interview types was collected.

The changing nature of the research surrounding AFSO contributed to the study adopting a systematic combining research strategy. Systematic combining is an abductive research approach that is characterised by the continuous repositioning of the research issues and analytical framework during the course of the research because of the unpredictable nature of the real empirical world (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). In a systematic combining process, the development of a theoretical framework, empirical fieldwork, and a case analysis take place simultaneously. Systematically combining these simultaneous activities reflects and accommodates the uncertainty of empirical fieldwork in the real world.

Systematic combining anchors the research on theory and begins with a preliminary analytical framework (Dubois and Gadde, 2002). The preliminary analytical framework is based on sensitising concepts derived from the literature (Blumer, 1954)

and preconceptions that are the products of the induction and abduction processes of data analysis. This preliminary framework is developed over time through discoveries from an iterative process of fieldwork, analysis and interpretation. The outcome of this process is that the theory is understood through empirical observation, and empirical observation is understood through the theory.

From the preliminary framework, systematic combining starts when the evolving framework begins to guide the search for empirical data. (1) With new data from further interviews or other data sources, unanticipated but related issues that are uncovered are explored, and the evolving theoretical framework is subsequently redirected. (2) Continuing with the use of induction and abduction to the new data, preliminary concepts that were used to guide the initial framework are refined and redefined. In short, the evolving concepts are both the input and output of induction and abduction, i.e., observation changes the theory and theory changes observation. Systematic combining becomes a tool and a product, i.e., the case.

3.4.13. NVivo

Three qualitative tools that were essential to the process of analysing the data in this study were memos, modelling and coding. In this study, NVivo provided these necessary tools of qualitative analysis through which the induction, abduction and thematic analyses of data are carried out.

"Today, the use of software to assist qualitative analysis is a must" (Carvajal, 2002, p.1). Software is not an analysis (MacMillan and Koenig, 2004) but an analytical aid to organising, coding and examining data (Gibbs, 2002, p.105; King, 2004) so that

emerging patterns from the data can be more easily recognised (Lewis, 2004, p.451).

Software does not make judgements about the quality or suitability of each piece of data that is coded to each theme, nor does it offer any rationale for the eventual development of the concepts and theoretical framework. The tasks of becoming familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the text (Devereux, 2010, p.69), and of selecting and justifying the coding of each piece of data to its associated theme or factors, are the domain of the researcher's active process of thoughts, reflections and judgements throughout the entire analysis process. This process of the researcher actively engaging with the data is a complex, lengthy and cumbersome activity. Software can help in managing its complexity and the large amount of data that is the input and output of qualitative analysis, thereby making qualitative analysis "easier, more accurate, more reliable, and more transparent" (Gibbs, 2002, p.105).

NVivo is an example of qualitative research software. Three strengths of NVivo in qualitative research are (1) that coding becomes more efficient, especially with rapid coding, (2) the use of tree codes produces a better index system of codes, including cases, and (3) it enhances the ability to code complex data for multiple meanings and retrieve them (Richards, 1999). Five ways in which NVivo assists in the analysis of qualitative data are (1) in helping to managing data by organising and keeping track of the various records that make up a qualitative project, (2) in helping manage ideas by organising and providing quick access to factors that are being generated in the course of an analysis, (3) in helping to query data by asking questions about it, (4) in helping model the evolving framework, and (5) in aiding reporting on the data (Bazeley, 2007, pp.2-3).

Data collection and qualitative analysis are iterative processes (Johnston, Corban and

Clarke, 1999) and qualitative methods and software processes should be integrated (Johnston, 2006). Software allows segments of texts, i.e., bits of data, to be organised into factors (King, 2004). As analysis of new data progresses, the enrichment of the initial factors can be captured and stored in NVivo codes. Alternatively, initial factors can be modified to reflect the evidence from new data, or even discarded altogether if no further evidence is available to add weight to their credibility. When no new factors emerge, the data are considered saturated, and the data collection process is complete. Software makes it easier to conduct an audit trail of this analysis, thereby offering transparency to the researcher's work (Johnston, 2006).

The focus of this study was on (1) how candidates' qualities are perceived, i.e., positive or negative perceptions, (2) what factors these perceptions are to be attributed to, and (3) whether the attributions are internal or external to the candidates. Perceptions, factors and attributions were set up as codes prior to commencement of open coding of the data item. A code was also created for perceptions regarding interviewers to store comments about the interviewers. This was to capture interviewers' factors that influenced the interview. Initial open coding using induction and abduction analyses of the data items resulted in 228 codes. Very early on, the factors were divided into categories or themes which reflected factors from the literature. Eventually, new factors based on emerging patterns in the data were added to the growing list of themes of factors. In the end, as new codes emerged and similar codes merged, a hierarchy of factors denoted as trees were developed that encompassed all the codes that emerged from the data consisting of nine themes and 37 factors.

Another useful feature of NVivo is the classification function that stores and organises

the various attributes and values of participants in the data sample. Two functionalities achieved by this means were: (1) the separation of the data extracts into case nodes, which made it possible to explore key factors according to participants' attributes and values, useful for the purposes of this thesis because constant comparisons were made between the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates; (2) an attribute summary report, created by using the classification function, which provided a quick and convenient overview of the characteristics of the participants in the study.

Finally, the queries function in NVivo, specifically the 'matrix coding' option, was used to help examine, explore and pinpoint the factors and the strengths of the factors emerging from the data. While 'Word cloud' and 'Word frequency' options are useful as a starting point for getting a feel for the factors in the data, 'matrix coding' was used because the matrix outputs provide instant statistical information that indicates the relative prevalence of the factors present. Particularly useful were the 'coding references' and 'percentages' options. Coding references specify the number of data extracts contained in each code, and percentages stipulate the relative amount of text in the selected codes.

While technology may have revolutionised the way qualitative analysis can now be approached (Richards, 2002), it also poses the potential danger of devaluing rich data when users are uncertain about the capability of the complex software or daunted by the effort required to learn its operation and technical language (MacMillan and Koenig, 2004). This problem is compounded for the doctoral student who is learning about the methodology and the software at the same time (Johnston, 2006). A

common trap is the coding of data as an end in itself, and coding mechanically, without engaging with the software creatively (Richards, 1999). Using software in a creative manner can improve the quality of the analysis (Bringer, 2002) provided users are able to move beyond coding mechanistically to being able to reflect appropriately on the use of the software (Gilbert, 1999).

In conclusion, Figure 11 below delineates the mixed methodology adapted for analysing the data.

Figure 11: The mixed methodology of the study
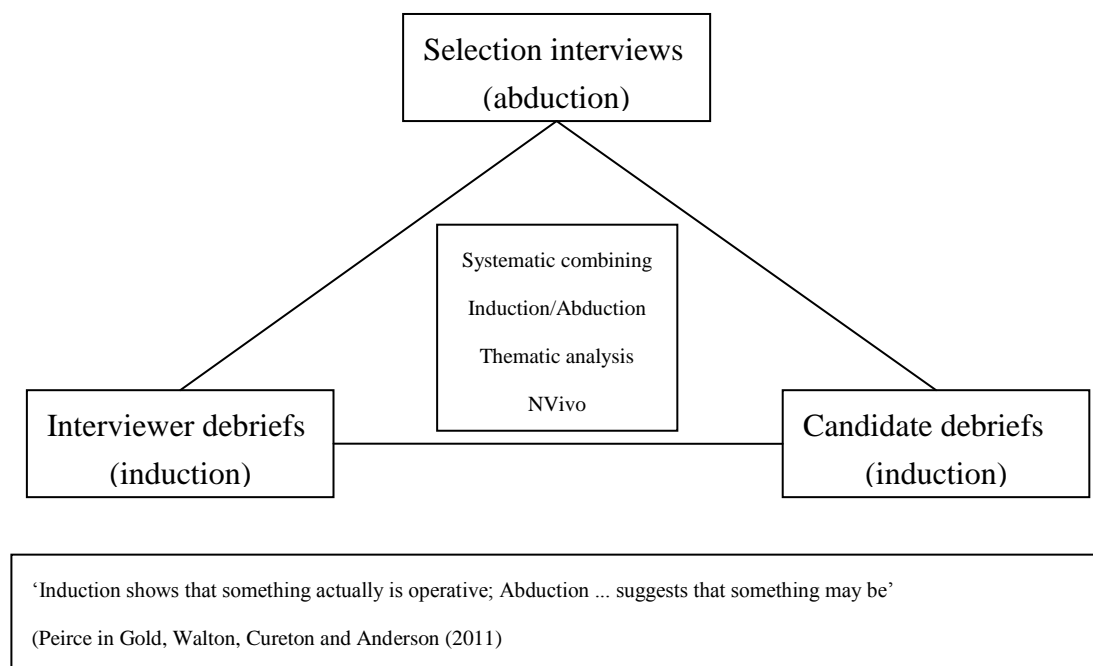
3.5. Scope of the study

This study was conducted within one large Australian financial services organisation. Data was collected solely from the metropolitan city of Sydney where half of Australia's Chinese population lives (Ho, 2008). Eight of the interviewers were

third-generation Australians and four were first generation Australians; none were Chinese. All of the 11 candidates were Chinese, eight of whom were from China, and one each from Australia, Cambodia and Malaysia.

3.5.1. The financial services industry

The reasons for choosing the financial services industry for this research has been detailed in Section 3.3.1. In brief, the choice of the financial services industry was driven by the need to ensure an adequate supply of suitable participants for the study.

3.5.2. Non-Chinese interviewers

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006), a first generation Australian is someone born overseas but living in Australia. A second generation Australian is someone born in Australia with at least one parent who was born overseas. A third-plus generation Australian is someone born in Australia with both parents also born in Australia. All of the 12 interviewers who agreed to be debriefed for this study were living permanently in Sydney at the time of data collection between July 2008 and March 2010. Eight of them were third-plus generation Australians and four were first generation Australians. One each of the first generation Australian interviewers was ethnic Lebanese and born in Lebanon, ethnic Indian and born in Fiji, ethnic Caucasian and born in England and ethnic Caucasian and born in New Zealand. An important feature of the interviewers in the study is that they were all non-ethnic Chinese.

3.5.3. The Chinese candidates

All the candidates in the study were ethnic Chinese, regardless of the fact that 10 of them were first generation Australians and one was a second generation Australian but with both parents born in Asia. Like the interviewers, all 11 candidates were living permanently in Sydney at the time of data collection. There are two reasons for emphasising these classifications. First, the word 'Chinese' is used in the literature in various ways: a Chinese national, someone whose race is Chinese, and an ethnic Chinese. A Chinese national is easy to identify; he/she is someone whose citizenship is Chinese. The literature often does not distinguish between 'race' and 'ethnicity'. However, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) states that people of the same ethnicity have a shared identity. They have a shared history, cultural tradition, ancestry, geographic origin, language, literature, religion, and other attributes that contribute to the diversity within and between races. Ethnicity is therefore a shared culture that gives groups their distinctive identities, regardless of their place of birth.

The second way that the candidates in this study can be deemed ethnic Chinese is that according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) ancestry, defined by the parents' or grandparents' places of birth or ethnicities, determines ethnicity. When people say that both their parents are from China and/or that their parents are ethnic Chinese, their ancestry is Chinese and so are their ethnicities. All the candidates in this study stated that they were Chinese and that their parents are or were Chinese. Therefore the candidates in this study were all ethnic Chinese, despite their various countries of birth, i.e., eight born in China, and one each in Australia, Cambodia and Malaysia.

3.5.4. Job descriptions

All the job positions were permanent. Nine were full-time positions and two part-time positions. In the first two cases, the candidates were applying for part-time work but the interviewers were recruiting for full-time work. AFSO recruits to the same standard regardless of whether the position is full-time or part-time, and therefore the mix of 'full time' and 'part time' was not important for this study. Candidates were applying for three different types of work in two business areas. Sales associates and business banking associates lie within business banking and share the same job description. Customer service representatives lie in the retail network. A range of jobs can be used in the same intercultural employment interview study; for example, Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt (2003) used seven different job types, and Goldberg (2003) used three different job types.

Sales Associates and Business Banking Associates ('BBA')

These two job roles are in business banking call-centres. Sales associates take incoming calls as well as make outgoing 'warm lead' calls selling merchant facilities, EFTPOS machines, online facilities, direct debit accounts, etc. They average 20 to 25 calls a day. Business banking associates support business bankers by continuing to build and maintain relationships with clients. They service the needs of small businesses wherever possible, or escalate matters to appropriate areas. They average between 60 and 80 calls a day.

According to the job description documents, key competencies for the business banking roles are:

- Client focus

- Relationship management

- Planning

- Communication

- Risk management

- Personal and interpersonal effectiveness

- Numerical/analytical ability and accuracy

- Flexibility

Customer Service Representative ('CSR')

This position is located in the branches, and is a customer-facing role. The key

competencies for this role indicated in the job description documents are:

- Work under pressure

- Teamwork

- Customer service

- Oral communication

- Selling skills

- Commercial acumen

Figure 12 summarises the 11 selection interviews and their associated business areas,

roles and full or part time positions.

Figure 12: Summary of roles in the research sample

Interview	Business area	Role	Part-time or full-time
01	Business banking	Sales associate	Full-time
02	Business banking	Sales associate	Full-time
03	Business banking	BB associate	Full-time
04	Business banking	BB associate	Full-time
05	Retail network	CSR	Full-time
06	Retail network	CSR	Full-time
07	Retail network	CSR	Part-time
08	Retail network	CSR	Full-time
09	Retail network	CSR	Full-time
10	Retail network	CSR	Part-time
11	Retail network	CSR	Full-time

3.5.5. Sample size and interview types

In general, the sample size for qualitative research is relatively small (Asif and Sargeant, 2000; Sekaran, 2003, p.296; Ebberwein, Krieshok, Ulven and Prosser, 2004; Lipman, 2008). Where the interview method is used for the purpose of gathering data, the number of interviews is flexible and dependent on data saturation. Data saturation is the point where no new information is observed in the data and this can be achieved from a sample size of as small as five (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Bowen, 2008). In fact "a study with more than 15 cases or so can become unwieldy" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.30). In a research study conducted by Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006), which involved 60 in-depth interviews with women in two West African

countries, the authors found saturation occurred in the first 12 interviews, with basic elements appearing as early as in six interviews.

In intercultural selection interviews, examples of small sample sizes in qualitative research are seen in Bilbow and Yeung (1998); Lai and Wong (2000); Wong and Lai (2000); Takata (2003); and Lipovsky (2006). In Lipovsky (2006), five role-play interviews and four authentic interviews were examined to understand how candidates negotiated their expertise. Takata (2003) captured eight real employment interviews on audiotape to explore the communicative competence of the Japanese candidates. Lai and Wong (2000) explored 12 simulated interviews of Singaporean university students applying for entry-level positions. In Wong and Lai (2000) the same researchers reported on nine simulated interviewers of Chinese university students. Bilbow and Yeung (1998) investigated impression management in intercultural interviews by examining 11 cases of placement interviews where university students were being interviewed for a three-month internship in the Hong Kong hotel industry. In this study, 11 cases of real selection interviews were examined. These 11 cases involved 23 participants made up of 12 interviewers and 11 candidates.

All the selection interviews in the present study were conducted face-to-face. Seven of these interviews were panel interviews involving two interviewers and one candidate, and four were one-on-one. In selection interviews 01 and 02, the panel interviewers were team leaders from the same department. In selection interviews 05, 07, 09 and 10, the main interviewers were working in different branches of AFSO and were the employing managers in the interviews. In selection interview 11, the main interviewer was the HR consultant. In selection interviews 05, 07 and 09, the second interviewers were the second-in-charge officers in the branches where they worked; the second

interviewer in selection interview 10 was the HR consultant; and the second

interviewer in selection interview 11 was a branch manager. The reason given for this

was that the HR consultant believed she could engage better with the candidate. Five

interviewers were involved in two interviews each, and the others were involved with

one interview each. The figure below summarises the cases of the selection

interviews, interview types, participants, and participants' age ranges.

Figure 13: Summary of interview types, participants and participants' ages

Interview	Interview type	Manager	Candidate
01	Panel	MA(1), MB(1)	C01|(1)
02	Panel	MA(1), MB(1)	C02(1)
03	One-on-one	MC(1)	C03(1)
04	One-on-one	MC(1)	C04(1)
05	Panel	MD(2), ME(1)	C05(1)
06	One-on-one	MF(2)	C06(1)
07	Panel	MG(1), MH(2)	C07(2)
08	One-on-one	MI(2)	C08(1)
09	Panel	MJ(2), MX(n.a.)	C09(1)
10	Panel	MK(2), ML(1)	C10(1)
11	Panel	ML(1), MM(2)	C11(1)

Note: Ages of participants are indicated in brackets as follows: (1) 21-30 years old, (2) 31 years old and above.

3.5.6. The selection interview structure and questions

AFSO professes to use structured interviews in its employment process. In particular,

it has a policy of using the BDI technique of interviewing. In research, the use of the structured interview is an advantage because the structured interview offers consistency in interview structure and technique (Sacco, Scheu, Ryan and Schmitt, 2003). Another example is seen in Wong and Lai (2000), where the researchers also used the BDI in their qualitative analysis of the Singaporean Chinese candidates who were being interviewed by an American multinational corporation and a professor from the United States.

At AFSO, templates of questions for the telephone screening interview, face-to-face interviews and reference checks are standardised and represent the minimum standard. Interviewers may ask additional questions as they see fit. Although the policy is for interviewers to use the BDI, it is observed that a situational interview was used in some of the cases. One interview did not contain any BDI or situational interview questions.

3.5.7. Defining a successful interview outcome in this research

During the course of a selection interview, interviewers evaluate the suitability of the candidates for roles. Based on this evaluation, perceptions are made that influences the interviewers' decisions and hiring outcomes. A successful interview outcome is generally associated with the candidate being offered the position, which is subsequently accepted. In the context of this research, successful interview outcomes included instances where the candidates were referred for further interviewing in the organisation. Referring candidates suggests that there are some important perceptions that are worthy of consideration by the organisation. On the other hand, all unsuccessful outcomes were immediately eliminated from further consideration by the

organisation. Comparing and contrasting successful and unsuccessful interviews highlights the factors that are important in selection interview processes and outcomes. Of the 11 selection interviews, one candidate was offered a position which was accepted, and three were referred for further interviewing. In other words, four of the selection interviews were successful and seven were unsuccessful.

3.5.8. Conclusion

This study was developed on the basis of a thorough survey of relevant literature on intercultural selection interviews. A research gap was identified, and research questions were proposed to address the gap. The previous chapters have shown that there was a gap in the literature and why certain research questions were formulated to address this gap. The literature survey has attempted to demonstrate that the proposed research is essential for supplementing the existing academic and practical literature. This is to be done by recording live selection interviews and the researcher's interviews with the interviewers and candidates. The remainder of the thesis will analyse the data using various theoretical frameworks with a view to providing the foundation for answers to the key research questions of this thesis.

4.   DATA ANALYSIS & DISCUSSIONS

Usually, with qualitative research, themes and theory are developed upwards from the data. In other words, findings have to emerge from the data. This chapter will reveal the findings from the systematic process adopted for analysing the data, to ensure that the theoretical findings of the thesis are developed from the data upwards. The procedure will follow coding and will be complete when the analysis establishes the relationship between perceptions and attributions in intercultural selection interviews. The factors that are identified as influencing intercultural selection interviews will be defined, based on the information in the data extracts.

4.1.   Key Research Question 1: Factors influencing perceptions

This section answers Key Research Question 1:

What are the factors influencing the structured behavioural description interview outcomes when non-Chinese interviewers interview Chinese candidates for entry level positions in a large financial services organisation in Australia?

Coding aided by NVivo began with reading the interviewers' and candidates' transcripts to determine the perceptions of the interviewers and candidates. Each perception was coded as:

1. positive or negative (neutral perceptions are coded as negative),

2. what caused the positive or negative perceptions (factors that caused the perception are noted in the heading of each code), and

3. whether the code was attributed to the candidate or not (i.e., internal or external cause).

This initial coding resulted in 46 factors, as follows:

1. career alignment

2. education

3. meaning of work

4. work experience

5. interview efficacy

6. interview experience

7. interview preparation

8. candidates' questions

9. deferring to authority and policy

10. interpersonal interaction

11. negativity

12. nonverbal and impressions

13. personal information

14. verbal responses

15. coping with pressure

16. customer service and sales

17. relationship with manager

18. relationship with peers

19. extroversion

20. work ethics

21. interviewers' behaviour

22. interviewers' expectations and preparation

23. interviewers' panel

24. interviewers' question quality

25. questions - general

26. questions - past behaviour

27. candidate pool

28. job type and complexity

29. luck

30. organisation and management

31. physical environment

32. pre-interview circumstances and arrangements

33. role confusion, hours and locations

34. age

35. gender

36. accent

37. candidates' cultural background

38. candidates' cultural exposures

39. candidates' cultural sensitivity

40. cross-cultural communication

41. cultural traits and differences

42. English language

43. interviewers' cultural background

44. interviewers' cultural exposure

45. interviewers' cultural sensitivity

46. perceptions, biases and stereotypes

All the coding references were reviewed against their respective codes, i.e., factors, to

ensure that each code name clearly reflected the content of the references, and that the codes were clearly distinct from each other. In achieving these aims, a few codes were merged, renamed, or split, and new codes created. This resulted in 37 codes that represented all of the factors that were found from the research sample to influence perceptions. Hence it answers the first key research question. In alphabetical order, these factors and their respective definitions were as follows:

1. Accent: participants' distinctive non-standard Australian sound.

2. Age: participants' age.

3. Atmosphere: general feel of the place, e.g., calm, fun.

4. Candidate pool: other candidates who were competing for the same job.

5. Candidates' questions: questions asked by candidates in the interview.

6. Career alignment: career fit between role and candidates' ability, education, passion and future direction.

7. Coping with pressure: ability to work under pressure and meet targets using techniques such as organisation and multitasking.

8. Cross-cultural communication: ability to speak a language other than English.

9. Cultural exposure: exposure to people who speak a language other than English.

10. Cultural savvy: participants' awareness, knowledge and skills in cross-cultural interactions.

11. Customer service and sales: candidates' knowledge and abilities in providing customer service and sales; includes product knowledge and relationship building skills.

12. Education: candidates' educational qualifications.

13. English language: standard Australian English used in the interviews.

14. Extroversion: candidates' degree of friendliness and communication in the interviews.

15. Gender: participants' sex.

16. Hours and locations: hours of work and place of the job.

17. Impressions: interviewers' feel for the candidates' personality, abilities, passion for the role, interview readiness, and professionalism.

18. Interview efficacy: candidates' degree of interviewing confidence, ability to adapt to the interviewers' behaviour, and willingness to try hard at the interviews.

19. Interview experience: candidates' experience of previous job interviews.

20. Interview preparation: candidates' reading of the job description, research on the organisation, Q&A preparations, with behavioural examples.

21. Interviewers' behaviour: attitude, conduct, behaviour and impressions of interviewers.

22. Interviewers' cultural background: interviewers' non-Chinese cultural background.

23. Interviewers' panel: one or more interviewers interviewing one candidate at the same time.

24. Interviewers' question quality: clarity and relevance of interviewers' questions to the candidates.

25. Job type and complexity: level of difficulty of the job role in a particular setting and industry.

26. Luck: getting a job by chance.

27. Meaning of work: candidates' motivation for making the job application.

28. Nonverbal: candidates' dress and physical behaviour in the interviews.

29. Parenthood: whether the candidate has children.

30. Physical environment: lighting, space, noise and cleanliness of the interview setting.

31. Pre-interview conditions: events leading to the interviews, e.g., role confusion, how the interview was organised.

32. Relationship with manager: candidates' potential relationship with the interviewers should they be successful in getting the role.

33. Relationship with peers: candidates' potential relationship with work colleagues should they succeed in getting the role.

34. Two-way interaction: whether interviewers and candidates are able to have a conversation, ask questions of each other, and make decisions about the role.

35. Verbal: candidates' responses aimed at selling themselves for the jobs by answering the interviewers' questions using behavioural techniques and effective speaking styles.

36. Work ethics: candidates wanting to be at work and possessing mature work habits.

37. Work experience: candidates' work history up to the time of the interviews.

In the analysis, the number of coding references indicates how many data extracts of perceptions are coded to each factor, hence they are indications of the prevalence of the factor. Using coding references had the advantage of being able to pick up the emphases in the successful interview, S10, in relation to all the other unsuccessful interviews, where the significant influences were repeated more often in the successful interview. For the purpose of our analysis, the prevalence of the factors are graded as follows:

1. A critical factor contains more than 100 coding references.

2. Strong factors contain between 70 and 99 coding references.

3. Moderate factors contain between 30 and 69 coding references.

4. Weak themes contain less than 30 coding references.

Table 1: Relative strengths of factors influencing perceptions

	NO. OF REFERENCES
CRITICAL FACTOR	
01. verbal	158
STRONG FACTORS	
02. cultural savvy	85
03. interviewers' behaviours	79
04. career alignment	74
05. English language	70
MODERATE FACTORS	
06. interview efficacy	60
07. customer service and sales	52
08. work experience	48
09. impressions	45
10. nonverbal	45
11. two-way interaction	43
12. meaning of work	41
13. interviewers' question quality	37
WEAK FACTORS	
14. work ethics	28
15. pre-interview conditions	28
16. interview preparation	27
17. physical environment	27
18. candidates' questions	25
19. interview experience	23
20. accent	20
21. interviewers' cultural background	19
22. extroversion	17
23. education	14
24. candidate pool	14
25. age	14
26. cross-cultural communication	14
27. hours and locations	12
28. job type and complexity	8
29. cultural exposure	8

30. relationship with peers	7
31. coping with pressure	4
32. atmosphere	4
33. relationship with manager	3
34. interviewers' panel	2
35. parenthood	2
36. luck	1
37. gender	1
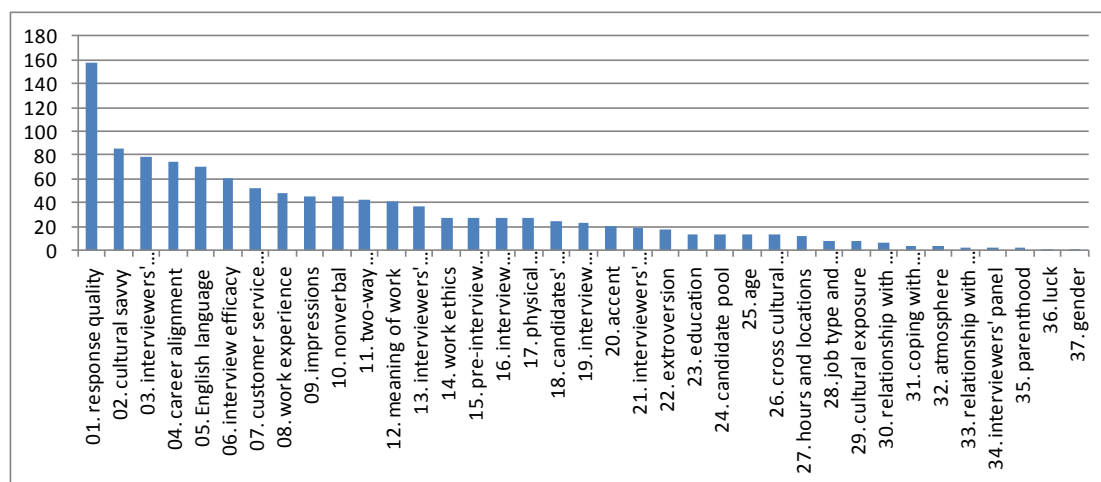
From the above analysis, it was found that the factor that overwhelmingly influences perceptions in an intercultural selection interview is the verbal factor. Verbal contained 158 coding references and was followed by cultural savvy with 85 references. Together with interviewers' behaviour (79 references), career alignment (74 references), and English language (70 references), these factors made up the five strongest factors influencing perceptions in an interview. For discussion purposes here, the verbal factor will be deemed a **critical** factor and the remaining four **strong** factors. Separating the strong factors from the next group of factors by at least 10 coding references, the eight factors that had a relatively strong influence on perceptions were interview efficacy (60 references), customer service and sales (52 references), work experience (48), impressions (45), nonverbal (45), two-way

interaction (43), meaning of work (41) and interviewers' question quality (37). For discussion purposes, these relatively strong factors will be deemed to be **moderate** factors. The remaining factors with less than 30 references each, will be referred to as **weak** factors. Table 1 summarises the list of factors.

The next step in the analysis was to conduct a query to separate the factors into the interviewers' and the candidates' positive and negative perceptions, and to distinguish the attributions as internal or external causes. Several steps were involved in conducting this query: (1) query perceptions by attributions, (2) create nodes for each of the four possibilities from the first step, (3) query perceptions by participants' attributions, (4) create nodes for each of the eight possibilities from the third step, and (5) query factors by perceptions of attributions by participants.

Scanning the result of this process provided the opportunity to audit and identify mistakes in coding the attributions. For example, career alignment is an internal factor and so should not have any codes in the external columns. As a result of this audit, six codes were re-allocated. Query nodes and query matrices were refreshed to obtain the final result. The following describes the 37 factors in order of the strength of each factor, beginning with the strongest. The definition of a factor is followed by the data imported from NVivo that shows the different ways that the interviewers and candidates were attributing their positive and negative perceptions. When the numbers of coding references within each factor differ by 10 or more, the influence is considered to differ. When the difference is less than 10, the influence is considered to be similar or same. Each section concludes with a discussion of the observations made from the data and supported by data extracts from the live selection interviews and the literature. We start with the first one below, namely 'Verbal'.

4.1.1. Verbal

Definition: candidates' responses aimed at selling themselves for the jobs by answering the interviewers' questions using behavioural techniques and effective speaking styles.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
verbal	58	66	20	15
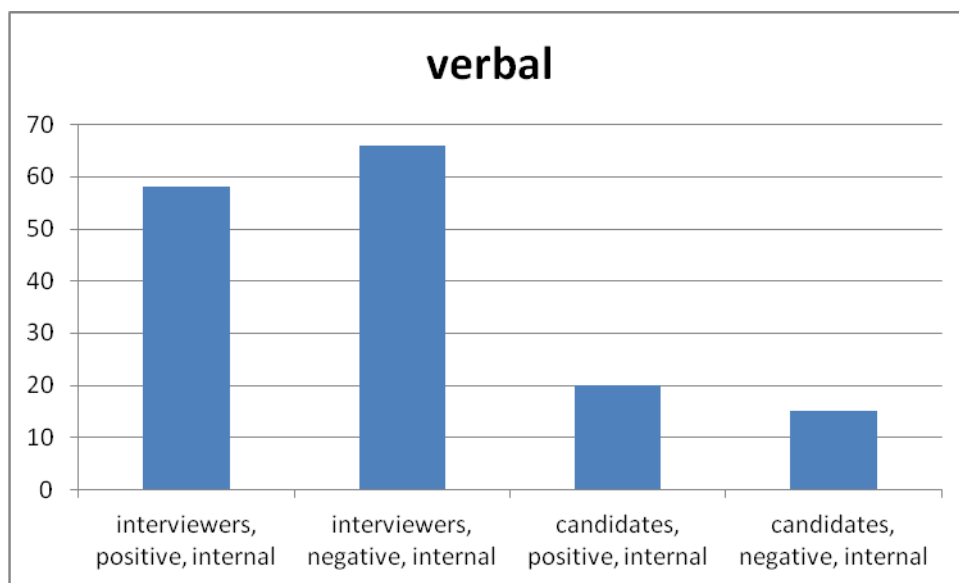
An internal factor, *verbal* is by far the most important influence on the perceptions of the interviewers and candidates in an interview. This critical factor very strongly influences both the positive and negative perceptions of the interviewers, with a lesser impact on both the positive and negative perceptions of the candidates. In other words, the interviewers and candidates appreciate the significance of the verbal factor, but the interviewers place much more emphasis on it than the candidates do. The data

also indicate that interviewers and candidates were positively and negatively influenced more or less to the same extent. The verbal factor is made up of several characteristics: the degree to which the interviewers' questions are being answered; speaking styles, particularly culturally sensitive speaking styles; interview types, particularly behavioural interview techniques; and promoting for role. Promoting for role influences hiring decisions (Barrick, Shaffer and DeGrassi, 2009), so the verbal factor is a decisive factor influencing interview outcomes. The remaining part of this section is structured according to these four verbal characteristics because of the length of the section.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS

Interviewers are influenced by the relevance of the candidates' answers to the interviewers' questions.

> *She's pretty good. I don't think she misunderstood what I was trying to say. The answers were coming back answering the questions. (MF 419-420)*

Candidates seem to fail in answering the interviewers' questions when they have poor speaking styles, are not culturally sensitive in their speaking styles, and do not use behavioural interview techniques, thereby failing to promote themselves in the interview. The consequence is that interviewers tend to 'give up' on the candidate even before the interview is over.

> *... he wasn't answering what we wanted to, the questions that were getting asked, so we were going in circles, we weren't getting anywhere. So you asked a*

question and then you ask again because he didn't answer properly and then you sort of kinda give up. (MB 397-399)

SPEAKING STYLES

Positive speaking styles are characterised by directness, succinctness and the use of relevant examples.

I've got a lot of information out of it. It didn't go on for a long long time but we were straight to the point and she was clear and concise and she answered my questions with relevance and relevant examples. My questions were answered satisfactorily. (MH 593-595)

Interviewers perceive candidates negatively when the responses are general.

But he was very general in his responses. He didn't actually did a lot of research on the actual job type. (MC 110-111)

So that's why that question was asking, and his answer probably didn't satisfy her, because he really doesn't talk about what he really wants to do. He just talks about the fact that in the next three to five years, I hope to find a suitable career for me. (MK 838-840)

An unsatisfactory response is given in the extract below. It shows that the interviewer was probing to try and obtain a more satisfactory answer from the candidate.

where do you see yourself in the next two to five years?
C10
OK. my short term goal is to into a banking job and into the banking industry. Dealing with clients [MK: mm] with products [MK: mm] In next three to five years, I haven't figure out a way, path of career suitable for me [MK: mm mm]

but ur I think, the problem is we are prepared, opportunity will be come [MK: mm mm] so [MK: OK.] start from bottom and take small steps, develop my career from retail banking.
ML
Is financial planning something that you would look at, or you would, you kinda being there, kinda done that? (S10 270-279)

Such responses are not convincing, and sometimes cause the interviewers to suspect that the candidates have not prepared themselves for the interview and are nervous. Or worse, interviewers suspect a lack of openness and honesty in the candidates.

Just carry the pride of being the employee of AFSO recognise that the way ((reading)) yeah, I remember at the time, it didn't yeah, I wasn't too excited about the answer.
R
Because?
MJ
Don't know, another statement. (MJ 391-396)

I think that it was nerves that made him kept talking and talking and talking, (MB 477-478)

... what I found was she was very specific in answers that she provided. Which is what attracted me in the beginning so she's very honest with her approach as well. (MI 155-157)

Often candidates' responses also lack succinctness and structure, thereby causing interviewers to become confused.

Structure. Just on that interview with C02, that it was just everywhere. So I just I was just more answer this we go to the next point, answer this we go to the next point, because I don't think it was heading in the direction we wanted to go. (MB 874- 876)

227

An example of an unstructured response by a candidate is shown below.

> *Now that's ur that's ur plenty of sales, that's ur up-sale [MB: mm mm] up-sale, so strategy, the, my, my franchiser told me ur the franchiser in Auburn, the owner of the Harvey Norman [MB: yep] taught me face-to-face how you can selling the product which is customer doesn't want to purchase, either add-on sales um because customer walk into a computer shop, he doesn't want to purchase, everyone not 100% just want to purchase the computer, just want to browsing ur if you like, go up to people, asking 'Can I help you?' he said 'Browsing'. This is 50 to 60 % of the customer response to you ((MA tries to say something; C02 speaks louder)) this is interesting just looking because, some of customers doesn't like people helping them, because they're shame, usually too shy, they too shy to express their requirements. (S01 124-132)*

Another characteristic that concerns interviewers is the lack of a balanced response from a candidate.

> *... it's not more personal than I expected. It's a quick description of her past work experience, what her interests were in, work wise, (MI 482-483)*

An illustration of a lack of balance between personal and professional background information is shown in an ice-breaker interview question as follows:

> *Yes, I graduate from Macquarie University Master of Applied Finance. And previous my degree in Bachelor of Commerce in accounting [MK: mm mm] And currently I'm working in a company [MK: mm mm] I assist the planners, and I got a couple of, one and a half years of experience. Back before then, in administration work, part-time in the ur trading company [MK: um um]. (S10 13-17)*

The following extract shows a candidate's attempt to find a balance between service

and sales in order to satisfy interviewers with his response.

> *It seem the sales, sales part is ((brief silence)) suppose sales part is still benefit the clients [MK: mm mm] we're not, the purpose of sales is to not, for just recommend product [MK: yeah] so we, we need to select the product to service them, and ur and ur we absolutely no better product than ur because they know nothing [MK: yep] they come to branch and know nothing, what product suits for them [MK: yeah] so we select product, you know we recommend them, and to persuade them um um this product is quite suitable for you [MK: yep] and then it's quite benefit for you [MK: OK.]   I think AFSO is still quite good in the sales part [MK: mm mm] because I read a report the most bank got a average ur um customer, AFSO clients got a average three or four product [MK: yep] for every client; but for ANZ just one or two [MK: yep] so I think its kinda process, is how to improve their service [MK: yeah, absolutely] yeah (S10 92-102)*

On the whole, however, the data show that interviewers generally accept the view that candidates' responses should be about work. They also believe that a focus on customer service as the main selection criterion is sufficient, rather than a balance between customer service and sales.

> *It's interesting though that when you ask somebody about themselves they refer to their work history not about who they are as a person. So I mean I know that an interview is about you know previous work experience (MI 471-473)*

> *That added customer service and being number one in customer service by 2010 June, is our number one where we need to get to, and I need people on board that can get us there. (ME 263-264)*

Statements that are unsupported are unconvincing and frowned upon by interviewers.

> *It's like, it's like saying, I'm hardworking, or I'm ambitious. Whose eyes, you know what I mean, I've been told I'm ambitious, and I tell what do you mean by*

you've been told, well my bosses I've worked with in the past. But these are just statements by them [R: true] that have nothing to back it up. (MJ 342-345)

In S09, the interviewer challenged the candidate to explain what he meant by "challenging".

... yeah, that was quite exciting and challenging but it was a good experience.
MJ
What do you mean by challenging? (S09 42-44)

Giving examples, a behavioural technique, counteracts the tendency to make unsupported statements.

For somebody who doesn't hear well I think I can [MH: yeah] yes, in the pharmacy where I work because, quite a few old people [MH: OK.] come to the shop and ur hearing is, could be a problem so we have to, one, I've overcome that by enough face to face [MH: aha] and speaking slowly [MH: yep] because they lip read [MH: yeah] [MG: yeah] and ur that's that's that's quite a, a skill [MH: yeah.] that I have picked up. (S07 293-298)

The importance of using an effective speaking style in an interview is reflected in the following contrasting comments by C09, who was unsuccessful in the interview, and C10, who was successful in the interview.

I think most of the irrelevant is towards the end of the question when they asked me something and I've answered it and then I should have just stopped, period. And then I kept going on, talking about things that like it's like addition to the answer they gave. They understand so I'm just being stupid of adding extra features to my answers. (C09 64-67)

> *Probably yes, when I concern is I probably, interviewer ask question I'm prepared, and the way you express to your employer is clean, clear, nice, quite neat, well organised, (C10 911-912)*

Another feature of speaking style is a candidates' tendency to respond by deferring to authority, displaying negativity, or including personal content in their responses – tendencies which are culturally-driven. Deferring to authority creates mixed responses in interviewers. In the first extract below, deferring to authority resulted in a negative perception attributed internally to the candidate not comprehending the question. In the second extract, the positive perception was also internally attributed, but this time to the candidate's respect for authority.

> *Ask him why he wants to work for the bank and I'm sure we mentioned something there, what makes him want the job and he started talking about BB and things like that but I think it's getting down to exactly why, what made him apply for this role and why he thinks he's going to be suitable for this role and do you know a bit about this job and stuff like that. (MB 880-885)*

> *I think his response shows me a deep respect for a manager, I think that he you know, I feel like he draws on a lot of, he puts a manager up in light, as in you know I need to know what kind of lines you know, he wants rules, he wants to know what's right, what's wrong, the manager's going to give me some support like, tell me my own sales experience, you know difficult customers. (MK 556-560).*

From the above analysis it appears that interviewers' subjective perceptions contribute to their perceptions of candidates. When not to defer, but to challenge, the manager is an important characteristic revealed in interviews. Managers want a more equal relationship with candidates than candidates are used to.

... she took ownership of the interaction as well, so that was what I really enjoyed about her. (MI 165-166)

The following extract shows a role-play between interviewer and candidate that highlights the inability of the candidate to challenge his manager under circumstances where that would have been appropriate.

This is the first time in 18 years that I've ever been charged this fee. See my account, never done this before. I'm a very loyal customer, I have a home loan with your organisation and you're going to charge me 30 dollar 30.
C09
um ur I understand your situation and I think ur if I were you I wouldn't want to be charged with the 30 dollar fee. It's just something you won't want to pay. Let me just try to speak to any officer or manager that can handle this matter and I'll just be with you in a few seconds, I'll try my best to have your 30 dollar waived.
MJ
Now, if you can waive half for me, so what I'll do is I'll give you 15 dollars back, and you can come back and deliver for me.
C09
um I've spoken to another senior manager and tried my best to achieve a sort of good solution which is um we can waive half of the fee for you, Sir.
MJ
Half of it? Why not the full? We're talking about $30. You've just raised $4.7bn in your profit, and you and I are having a conversation round $30.
C09
Well technically, whenever a customer overdraws from his or her account we have to charge them overdrawn fee because you have a home loan with us and of course you have been a loyal customer with us for 18 years um I'm just trying to do my best and try to lower down your cost or inconvenience as much as possible.
MJ
I am not happy.
C09
I guess I'll speak to my manager again, or have him speak to you about this issue ((C09 is laughing slightly)) (S09 558-583)

Few candidates are aware of how their behaviour can make a negative impression in such circumstances. They seem to pride themselves on relying on figures of authority for guidance. Successful candidates are careful with this factor in an interview. In the extract below, C10 he attributes this tendency to cultural differences; he seems aware of the influence of culture on the employer-employee relation.

Here, sometimes, you can have your answers, you can have some new ideas which you can share your manager, my manager is very kind, sometimes she says yes we can, we can improve that, sometimes we, she always like reasonable, say we can't because it is not our current focus, she always give you a reason. In China it's not that way, you got new idea, that's not your concern, that is not your concern, so quite strong, very strong, very strong, that's not your concern. (C10 627-632)

Unlike interviewers, who attribute this characteristic to the candidate, candidates externally attribute this characteristic to culture. Another culturally-driven verbal characteristic is pessimism. Interviewers want candidates who are positive, and successful candidates are aware of the influence of using positive language in an interview.

... positive language is important [R: positive language] Positive language. I mean there was one part in the interview that, when, like he used the word challenge [R: yes] that to me was a flaw in his, like a chink in the arm, it's like a chink in the arm, if that makes sense. So, there was something left when he said well I'm going to find it very challenging to actually serve customers. Automatically, I think that was a dummy, that was the breaking point for me. (MJ 745-750)

maybe, maybe is not good word.
R
Is not a good word, OK.

C10

I want to be.

R

They want you to be clear, definite.

C10

Definite. (C10 223-233)

Culturally-driven pessimism refers to being uncertain, minimising one's achievements, pointing out obstacles, and disclaiming responsibility (Bye, et al., 2011). When candidates exhibit these characteristics, they cause interviewers to perceive them negatively and to attribute the cause to the candidate rather than their culture. In the two instances below, this resulted in feelings of a lack of professionalism and self-worth on the side of the candidate.

> *Probably it's a satisfaction thing with him, like he's got poor leadership in the restaurant, I don't know. He didn't value the position as an opportunity, as a stepping stone. (MJ 158-160)*

> *I recall when I asked her this question and she was re-enacting there, no no no, I didn't do that, that's not my fault, I don't know, it may just have been that professionalism that dropped a little bit for me. Just re-reading it, when she said that, just lost it a tiny bit for me, that professionalism side of it. (MI 583-586)*

Candidates, on the other hand, attribute their pessimism to the external physical environment rather than to their culture. Neither interviewers nor candidates are always aware of the influence of culture in interviews.

> *... probably I was thinking it was tough, cause the Martin Place when I go inside, when I go inside, the environment give me the influence, (C06 80-82)*

Pointing out obstacles as a defensive tactic is a cultural characteristic (Bye, et al., 2011). Although this may include explanations of how the candidate overcomes those obstacles, the extract below shows that the candidate can in the meantime miss the opportunity to emphasise the requirements of the role.

> *um I think it's about opportunities, what opportunities come up, I guess with the ANZ, I guess the current job market is very competitive, a lot of people are actually being sacked, like graduates being sacked after one or two years of working, some going up against people with one or two years of experience already, whereas me, I only have limited industry experience ur so it can be tough at times, and I think from our organisation perspective they want to hire the right people with the right skills. (S09 197-202)*

Personal content in the verbal factor also influences perceptions.

> *So like for me for example I lived in Melbourne for three years. I used to study in university degree and which is a bachelor of dance which is my passion. Unfortunately I was injured so then I relocated to Sydney. And then, didn't know really what I wanted to do with myself, so I got into the retail business side of it, looking for five day a week sort of operation rather than weekend trading and this is why I'm applying for this job today etc. So a bit more about who they are as a person and so not what they are as a title and at work so yeah. (MI 501-507)*

Candidates are unaware that interviewers have personal preferences with regard to how much candidates should divulge about their personal self in interviews. For example, C08 states, in the remark cited below, that one reason candidates are generally reluctant to share personal information in an interview is their belief that cultural differences make this inappropriate.

> *But if in China, it will be a lot different. Because the greeting will be routine as well. But they will ask more information. Maybe because here they more concern*

235

about the personal privacy so they won't ask, just greeting. But China, oh where are you from, where you live, something like that, your, is it far from our company, far from your place, is it easy to get here, something like that. So, maybe for me I will feel more warm. (C08 388-392)

This analysis suggests that interviewers' expectation of an exchange of personal information runs counter to their own culture, so this is a case of the interviewers' personal preference influencing their perceptions of the candidates.

The way candidates answer interviewers' questions can help gain the interviewers' trust in the candidates' ability.

I like the way he answered this question as well like around the product knowledge, cause I believe him, I believe him that he would researched the product, take brochures home that type of thing, he's got a genuineness in his voice, and also showed from the SSS that he did, he'd gone to do some research before coming to the branch so he's not lazy. (ML 315-319)

Positive perceptions result when candidates use examples, answer questions specifically, and use 'I' in their responses, rather than 'we'.

So number one, 'I', that she has responded to with an 'I' answer. (MI 534)

INTERVIEW TYPES

The use of specific examples is particularly important when candidates are selling themselves for a role. Examples demonstrate what the candidate has done, as opposed to what the candidate feels they are meant to do, i.e., simply following policy. As well

as showing an ability to be detailed, giving examples conveys to the interviewer that

the candidate is open and honest.

> *There was a couple of times when I got the company policy and didn't get specifically what C06 had done. (MF626-627)*

> *So if they answer a question, I think it's a great answer asking more details to see whether it's just a rehearsed kind of answer or if it's genuine. (MG 324-326)*

Below is an example that illustrates the effective use of a work example to

demonstrate an ability.

> *What, what sort of mechanisms or um practices did you put in place to deal with the ur I guesss, the, the many tasks that you have to get through in a small amount of time?*
> *C07*
> *um prioritising [MH: aha] is one thing, staying calm [MH: aha] and patient ((all laugh)), cool, keep my head cool ((all laugh)) [MH: yep] and ur yes, and I suppose supporting one another in the te- in the pharmacy, because very often um my other assistant, she might be busy looking after some, some other customers [MH: aha]. And if somebody else is waiting on line, and I'm doing something with the stock, I left that, and go straight and attend to the customer [MH: OK.] so that's prioritising one's ... ((MH interrupts)).*
> *MH*
> *... so the customer's always first priority, but you, OK. [C07: yes] OK. Excellent. (S07 203-214)*

The extract below illustrates a good behavioural interview question and response.

> *Give me an example of a skill which you have learnt and apply, and applied at work that would make working in a busy environment easier.*
> *C08*

um yeah I could give an example when I work in the retail shop [MI: yes] Cause in the high season lots of tour groups come and tend to be very big and long queue. So some customer, they might complain that 'Oh, I've been waiting so long and haven't been served yet'. So normally I would do, I would ur come to them and ur um explain the situation cause we're having the extremely busy time and um apologise for keeping them waiting, and meanwhile I will give the product brochure to them, let them know what the product that we have and what's the product function [MI: mm] and also bring some samples to let them try and free ur feel [MI: OK.] ur so all I do is try to distract their attention and give little bit more information [MI: OK.] let them to digest themselves [MI: OK.] and also save more time for me um to serve the current customer. I think the current customer should be more focused and I have to make sure that they are happy, and they are getting the service or product they want [MI: OK.] And when I do a transaction, I um no matter how good I am, I will double check the quantity, the unit price, the total amount and make sure that every transaction doing accurate and quickly do the package [MI: OK.] and try to let the queue move as fast as possible.
MI
Excellent… (S08 53-70)

Negative perceptions result from a candidates' answers being ambiguous, lacking in description and examples, not illustrating a process, making unsubstantiated claims, and using irrelevant examples.

From memory I found her client objection one a little bit ambiguous, her response. It might have been that or it might have been client service one. One of them was very ambiguous and I had to ask a lot of time probing. (MC 474-476)

Probably be a little bit more descriptive around the answers to the questions. So there were some specific questions I think I asked, like 'Give me an example of something that you've actually done' and those questions I didn't get specific answers on some of them. Now I don't remember which questions they were, like, Can you give me an example where you used fact-finding skills to get information from a client? She talked about how she does it but she didn't give me a specific example of where she's done. She knows what's the requirement of

the company that she works for, obviously like, the way you have to deal with the clients, but I didn't get a specific example. So it's probably one of the things. There was a couple of times when I got the company policy and didn't get specifically what C06 had done. (MF 617-626)

Well, it's talking about getting the target. It's not actually a process on how you're going about it. So it's automatically looking at the end goal of, well this is what I've gotta do, um it was a statement. It wasn't, nothing that really grabbed me (MJ 319-323)

See when he's talking here, when we ask him how he builds customer relationship, and he's saying, he talked about building rapport, you build relationship, but he doesn't actually say how he does it. (ML 753-755)

It's like, it's like saying, I'm hardworking, or I'm ambitious. Whose eyes, you know what I mean, I've been told I'm ambitious, and I tell what do you mean by you've been told, well my bosses I've worked with in the past. But these are just statements by them [R: true] that have nothing to back it up. (MJ 340-343)

Like anyone can say that, but to show that you actually do it well, that's when you actually go into the detail of it, and he he doesn't provide any example, he provides example it's not really related. (ML 763-765)

The extract below illustrates a good behavioural question but a poor behavioural response that did not convince the interviewer.

Can you give me an example of when you have to do multiple task in order to get through your daily workload? How did you manage this and what is the outcome?
C09
um I try to be um use the people around me, like team work. There was once I was working at ANZ the manager gave me a task that was due next day lunch time. When she gave me the task it was due towards on the day's lunch time. But then about 15 minutes later she calls me and she goes, 'Actually I made a

239

mistake. I actually have to hand it in by today lunch time'. So I only had one
hour something to finish it. On top of that I have my daily task to do. So I went up
to one of the colleague and I told her about the situation. I said can you give me
a hand in term of my daily procedure and I will try to take care of the other issue
so I can get both tasks out of the way.
MJ
How did you go?(S09 166-176)

Behavioural responses can be correct, but of poor quality, as shown in the extract

below.

Oh definitely. I keep a, I actually have two diaries, I set my personal task and my
work task.
MJ
yeah, you've got two diaries? ((unbelievable little laugh))
C09
yeah, I've got two diaries. I try to make things, I try to plan ahead pretty much
um in term of the work diary I try to schedule out like in advance three weeks, if I
can, if I get a moment and ur in terms of uni assignments, in terms ur of days I've
got to go to work or, stuff like, major tasks, I prioritise. Sometimes the manager
say there will be, you have to get this thing done by tomorrow, lunch time. And
then I have to keep that in mind.
MJ
How do you go against those plans, how do you go against those diaries, how do
you?
C09
Oh well you just have to recognise which one is more important, sometimes you
know, I have friend's birthday parties to go to, but if boss calls me in, I just have
to deal with that first.
MJ
On a percentage, if you have to rate yourself, on a percentage of success versus
not success on having these diaries, how do you go? Against your plan? (S09
152-162)

An alternative to the behavioural interview is the experiential interview. Experiential questions reveal a candidate's positive perceptions, their personality and their motivation.

> *... he was very eager, enthusiastic, and certainly knew the background to the bank, I can tell he had done some research about it, the kind of job he was looking for, we sat down, we had just a casual chat. (MK 62-64)*

They can also highlight a candidate's abilities. The following extract S01, is an example of a good experiential interview response showing the skills of the candidate.

> *Currently um working for St George part time, in margin lending in the city [MB: mm mm] um doing, you know, loans documentation and reconciliation department. So I'm doing all the documentation preparation, doing accounts, setting up loans, company charges um trust vetting and all that sort of stuff [MB: OK.] Been at St George, been there for nearly a year and a half now [MB: Excellent] yeah initially was a contractor with them. I did fixed loan processing, because with margin loan, you um it gets really busy during June. A lot of customers want to fix their loans up so that they can get the tax benefits. So during that time [MB: mm] yeah it gets very busy. So I, I started that, I started in that role initially, and then moved onto the LDR team, which is the documentation and reconciliation team [MB: OK.] yeah ... (S01 25-34)*

Negative perceptions in an experiential interview result from candidates not answering the question asked and confusing the interviewer, or from general responses that do not specifically answer the question.

> *Just questions about him, I didn't even get a chance to ask what he likes to do in his spare time, and does he have any family and why does he wake up in the morning, what are his goals and I didn't get to ask him that because I was still confused as to what he was going to say (MB 428-431)*

So that's why that question was asking. And his answer probably didn't satisfy her, because he really doesn't talk about what he really wants to do. He just talks about the fact that in the next three to five years, I hope to find a suitable career for me. (MK 837-839)

The extract below is an example of a poor experiential interview response.

And ur previously I work in Harvey Norman [MB: Alright, yep], as a sales manager [MB: OK.]. And ur previous to that, I'm work in my friend's company [MB: yep] as a help desk, desk help [MB: OK.] and ur customer as well [MB: Right]. So, so, as my local, because I've got my own local business banker, BB [MB: Oh, alright, OK.] ur he told me, probably because, I, I told him, I'm really wants to work in bank system [MB: yep] to get experience [MB: aha], because finally ur business just other part of my life. I'm more likely to work in a, like the role, like BB, BB work as well. (S02 40-46)

A third interview type to be considered in looking at factors influencing perceptions of candidates is role-play.

It depends like, really just depends on the person I think, but I think it's just, I think it's just nerves ((reading)) he's just like, that the guy after it's settled, I think that SSS account is most suitable for you, so you can give me the account, yep, sure I'm going to open the account right now just like no mucking about, he's going to do it now, he's very aggressive, and now there's some more questions about it. I remember in his face, he looked very desperate, it's like take his photo, if I was the customer, I'd feel quite intimidated by that. (ML 848-853)

One candidate, C10, suggested that role-play is cultural.

No, no, no, not very, not very comfortable, cause, in Australia if you study high school, you may play games with that but for us no [R: you don't] no. (C10 705-706)

In this study role-play had little influence on the perception of candidates, one reason for this being that role-play took place in only four of the 11 live selection interviews. Consequently, role-play will not be explored further in this research.

PROMOTING FOR ROLE

Promoting for role involves the way a candidate manages information to highlight their experiences, competencies and suitability for a role (Bright and Hutton, 2000).

> *Well, if you apply for a service job you'll be focusing more on your customer service strengths [R: alright] Alright, and talk about your experiences and be a bit more specific around what you're actually doing ... (MJ 733-735)*

Successful promotion requires that the candidate knows something about the organisation that they are applying to and crafts their responses accordingly. The following shows an interviewer's positive perceptions regarding a candidate's relevant response to an organisation's vision.

> *For me that's a good answer, because it's telling me why he's applied for the job, he talks about he's happy helping people, he's he talks about increasing wealth which is obviously a big part of the bank ... (MK 429-431)*

Successful promotion also requires that candidates communicate their relevant work experience, particularly in teamwork, as well as their ability to meet work targets, their personal qualities such as initiative and passion for the work, their customer service excellence, and their thoughtfulness in their questions. The presence of these characteristics creates positive perceptions.

I do remember she was saying how she worked in the pharmacy, she had great initiative. Some of the examples she gave show that she did really have great initiative plus people skills. There was one instance I can't remember what she said, she offered to drive a customer home which was going really out of the way for someone, so.(MG 270-273)

I think it's a very relevant and well thought question actually. I don't think I've ever been asked that question before but, it shows that she, for me, that question shows that she's got the motivation to be a successful teller. Yeah, I would definitely think a lot more highly of a candidate that ask that question. (MH 287-290)

The following data extracts from S01 and S06 illustrate the ability to successfully promote oneself for a role, thereby engaging the interest of interviewers in a live selection interview.

... you're managing aspects of a customer service.
MB
Exactly, so we're the ones who're advising the customer what best suits, what facilities best suit their business. We're the ones that are actually completing the form and gathering information. Others, well you're not transferring them to another department ... ((C01 interrupts)).
C01
... that sounds good, that sounds appealing for me. If a customer calls and they asks me a particular query [MB: yeah] I would like to offer them the products and business accounts and all that, I can put them in the right direction. Well that's ur that sounds, yeah.
MB
That's what we do.
MA
What else that would be a benefit for you, this is what you'll like as well. (S01 170-183)

ur actually mm for me I'm thinking, doing the customer service I actually helping the people [MF: yep]. So I serve the, I sell the product to the customer [MF:

yep] and of course I need to explain the benefit for them first [MF: yep] so, what I do is helping them, so they can get the benefit from what I sell to them [MF: yep] And if they got any difficulty, anything, I can help them as well, so the customer service not only about the product [MF: yep] it's about the after sales customer service [MF: yep] so basically, cause related to my current job [MF: yep] I'm selling the mobile phone [MF: yep] so basically if they got any problem about the phones or whatever, I still need to help them to solve that [MF: yep] yeah, check their account, whatever.
MF
So that's the great stuff, you are there to help clients (S06 24-34)

Negative perceptions are aroused when these factors are lacking.

He wasn't successful due to I suppose a lack of evidence of having to work in a busy environment and still meet sales targets. (ME 78-79)

Additional personal qualities demonstrated in interviews that convince interviewers of a candidate's suitability for a role are being personable and confident. Timidity is perceived negatively by the interviewers.

So it's refreshing for me because when she came in she was very personable and, is quiet sort of confidence, which is really important because you had, you're dealing with people's finances. If you're not confident about it, then it goes pear shape, so that was what I meant by preconceived ideas. (MI 412-415)

The failure to sell oneself, apart from being a missed opportunity, is in itself perceived negatively by interviewers.

... a bit of negative because I don't think C11 really tried to sell himself you know, like he really did not put in more effort at least to show us that he, given that he currently working in a financial environment, like using those

245

experiences, and show how he can be of benefit to our organisation you know. So there isn't much there. (MM 243-246)

Over-playing one's role also negatively influences the perceptions of interviewers. Baron (1987) found that when candidates are perceived to over self-promote themselves, their ratings decrease.

... then she took on to the superior side of it, and said I would ask every team member to write down on paper or email classify what the job description is. That is initiative again, that she's taking. And as a strong team player re-clarifying what her job expectation and what other job expectations are. The only concern for me with that would be if she was a team member with the branch. If she took her initiative to do that, it could get people off side. (MI 586-591)

Over-playing one's role in an interview is illustrated by the following extract.

So what I would do is, I would ask ur every my team members um write a paper or email and send it to everyone, classify what their job description or what is their responsibility [MI: mm mm] so everything is Black and White, nobody could just run away [MI: mm] and also they need to update on a daily basis [MI: yeah] so ur let everyone know what's the whole progress of our whole project, what's going on and if you got any problems everyone could come and help [MI: yep] yeah and also ur you need to ur communicate with them frequently (S08 122-128)

SUMMARY

In summary, the verbal factor is an exceptionally strong influence on perceptions in an interview, determining if the candidate will succeed in promoting themselves for the role. As well as providing information that is relevant to the role, candidates

should craft their responses in a way that also considers accent, dialect, formality, and commitment to achieve various goals (Bright and Hutton, 2000; Bye, et al., 2011). Success with regard to the verbal factor involves answering interviewers' questions directly, succinctly and completely. To achieve this, the candidates must utilise several techniques. These concern speaking style, behavioural responses and culturally sensitive responses. Poor style is characterised by general responses, lack of succinctness and structure, making statements without evidence, and not being balanced. These can result in negative perceptions of the candidate's various skills (such as sales and customer service) and personality traits (such as confidence, openness and honesty), and can also result in confusing the interviewer. Interviewers are positively influenced when responses that are behaviour-based are delivered in a culturally sensitive manner. Behavioural responses must be characterised by the use of relevant work examples, focused on 'I', and structured to create the impression of openness, honesty and believability.

Many factors influence the various verbal characteristics in an interview, the primary ones being culture, English language ability, interviewers' behaviour, and interview experience. These will be discussed in the sections below. These influences are often underestimated by both interviewers and candidates, who are usually only vaguely aware of the requirements needed to convince and satisfy an interviewer as to a candidate's suitability for a role. There are different possible consequences when responses are inadequate. At best, the interviewer is spurred to probe for more information. At worst, the interviewer distrusts and judges the candidate on the basis of inadequate information, leading them to give up on the candidate.

4.1.2. Cultural savvy

Definition: a participants' awareness, knowledge and skills in cross-cultural interactions.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
cultural savvy	30	2	6	47
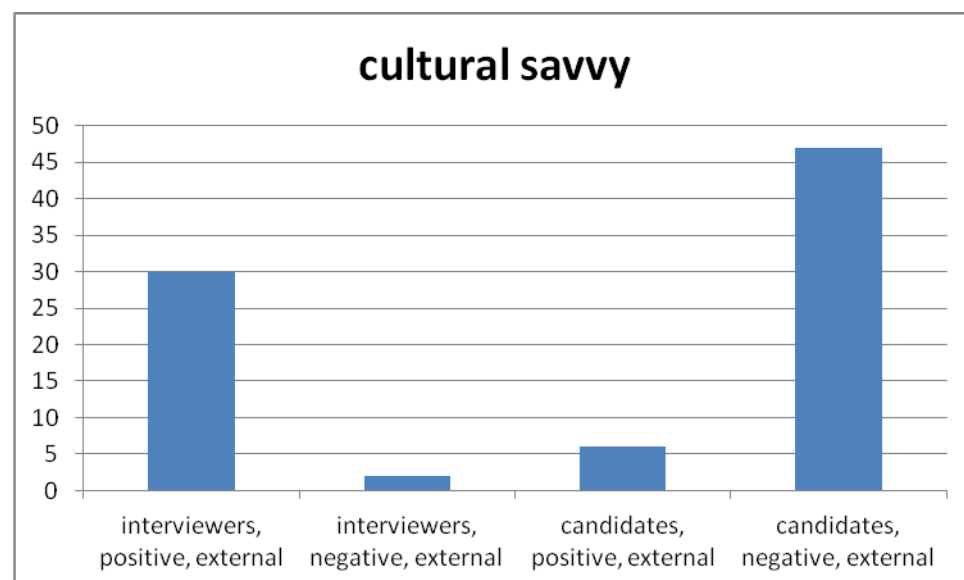
Cultural knowledge and sensitivity is crucial to intercultural communication (Rings, 2006). An external factor, cultural savvy, is the second strongest factor to influence perceptions in an interview. The factor influences the candidates more than the interviewers. In other words, the candidates are more aware of the influence of culture than the interviewers. This suggests that the interviewers and candidates differ in the degree of responsibility they take for the management of cultural influences in an interview. Also, the influence on the interviewers is more positive but the influence on the candidates is more negative, which may suggest that the candidates are not

necessarily aware of their cultural adaptability in interviews. Cultural savvy is a strong mediating factor on interview outcomes, but to the candidates it is a decisive factor. Cultural savvy refers to the ability of interviewers and candidates to act in culturally sensitive ways.

CULTURAL AWARENESS

In selection interviews, cultural awareness is reflected in candidates' understanding of cultural differences in the interview context, as well as their awareness of cultural stereotypes influencing an interview, which in some cases may be to their advantage.

> *Here, they want you to talk like this way. You can smile, you should smile in both cultures, but you won't talk like "I will smile" in China, it's kinda kind like kindergarten talk, it's kindergarten talk, it's not like mature. (C10 473-475)*

> *I think that's a positive thing. I think that could be a positive thing, because people perceive that Chinese people are hardworking people, so that's a benefit for us, that could be one benefit for us. I think that is a very good benefit for the fact that if it's is a cross-cultural interview (C01 866-869)*

It gives the candidates confidence and helps them to promote and sell themselves for the role in interviews.

> *A bit probably, yeah I need to like improve, it's like I need to get more knowledge about the culture in here, probably it's like ( ) so next time when I go for interview, like I can offer like, how to say that, yeah, probably more confident. (C03 604-606)*

CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Cultural knowledge used in a selection interview includes history, body language, differences in selection criteria, difference in interpretations of selection criteria, knowledge of interview protocol, expressions in interview communication, and the way different cultures think.

> *The history, the culture here, exactly how to answer the question. (C02 696)*

> *The way people greeting with each other like shake hands, or how they smile to people. Or they hand over stuffs to the other people with two hands, it's just a slight influence (C05 528-530)*

> *Yes, career goal. Because they ask me what part of the logistics you are interested in and you want to develop more. And I say that because in China, for the new graduate or new like people in the company, you do whatever they ask you to do. You don't have like much choice. Like I want to do this, I want to do that. Here they want you to clearly know what do you need to do. So what I answer is actually from the beginning I don't really mind cos I needed to get more experience of every aspect and then I would know which.*
> *R*
> *But they expect you to already know.*
> *C08*
> *Yeah. So they are not satisfied.*
> *R*
> *So basically you need to direct yourself rather than them directing you.*
> *C08*
> *That's right. So that's cultural difference. (C08 549-562)*

> *I don't know, he asked me to describe outstanding whatever, like customer, like that one, that's why for me it's a bit hard, I was thinking, it was all quite good, but he was asking me to like describe one outstanding one.*
> *R*

So what he considers good you may think differently.
C06
Yeah, for me it's normal, for him it's good. For him is good, for me is normal. (C06 584-590)

For example, if she ask a question, about have you complete your study, something like that. And I will say OK. I complete my studies already. I don't know if I need to add more. Just answer short, because, answer what she ask, yes or no. Or maybe add more information to her. I don't know what's their like traditional, whether I need to expand or not. (C08 524-528)

... for different people from different cultures, there will be some difference in the way they express themselves in an interview, (C05 474-475)

Behaviour will be the way of thinking, the way they think. The cultures, if they are the same culture, they may think the same. (C01 723-724)

CULTURAL SKILL

Cultural savvy involves the ability to adapt oneself to suit someone from another

culture.

Yes. I would say so, not for this interview but I would say so because when you get a sense of the accent, you start labelling things, you start labelling things on them, maybe there may be some stereotyping, and once you get to know a bit about their culture, the interviewer's culture you think, OK. that's where they are from, I would actually may say things differently to fit that particular culture. (C01 875-879)

The ability to adapt is not always conscious.

Yes, yes, probably I do that, maybe unconsciously I will adapt. (C01 1201)

251

This includes becoming savvy at a behavioural interview, which is the usual interview form used in Australia, unlike China, where the norm is the general experiential interview.

> *Yes, we call behaviour questions because it's kind of questions you answer like, it's kind of test, like you say, ( ) normal situation. In China, the questions like not that standard, if you get interviews, you can ask various questions. (C10 758-760)*

The cultural difference regarding preference for behavioural interviews versus experiential interviews was recognised by the only successful candidate in the research sample, C10, who described the general questions expected in Chinese interviews as follows:

> *... How was your university? How is your colleague? What did you do normally in the university? Like casual talk. Like casual talk. (C10 764-765)*

CULTURAL ACCEPTANCE

Cultural savvy is also related to the individual being tolerant, accepting and taking some responsibility for managing cultural differences.

> *so we, we could see where he was trying to go, and so certainly we used our discretion when it came to that, and so if that was an English or an Anglo person interviewing we probably wouldn't have accepted some of the answers that he gave. But we could understand the difficulty he was saying, having, trying to get the words out, does that make sense?*
> *R*
> *So you make allowance for that?*

MK
You do. (MK 245-253)

Yep, the only concern I had was around the language [R: OK.] So whether I was being too accepting. I've always worked with people of a different country, always, have always hired people from Korea, like Japan, I always had, I relish their, you know, I like the fact that they've got different backgrounds, that culture, I love it. (MK 291-294)

... it's just something you come to. I think the more you talk to someone of that nature, the more you practise, it's practise on my behalf as well to understand what he is saying, and not vice versa, and so I got to understand him and, rather then him needing to understand me. (MK 190-193)

IMPACT OF BEING CULTURAL SAVVY

Cultural savvy can influence the way interviewers make assumptions giving rise to positive or negative perceptions about many of a candidate's personal characteristics, e.g., formality, sensitivity to criticism, conflict avoidance, empathy, caring, and passion for the industry.

When I say more respectful I suppose more, sometimes more shy at the start of an interview, would be one thing. They are always very polite too you know. And I have instances when they won't call me P ((first name)), they would call me Mr C ((surname)). And I know that could sometimes be an Asian influence as well. I'd say 'Call me P, nah that's fine'. That's the only difference, I'd say just relax like any other candidates I just want you to relax, (ME 403-408)

... don't take it too personally like it's not a negative, and that's what I'm afraid, like with the Chinese I think that, I'm aware that what I can say, negative, can be taken too personal. (MK 704-706)

Yeah I think so, it depends on how they, some people might not have been brought up to have conflict with people so they might shy away from that and go straight to authority figure and ask them for help. Some people might say no this is how they're brought up. They go straight up to the person. (MG 814-817)

I'd say the way she works with people as well. She did mention that like when she had a problem with people, customers and things, she was very empathetic with them and would help them as best she could and I think sometimes it could be cultural. (MG 673-675)

I know that C10 researched on the website, so they're both thorough, they're very, they're just genuine people when, I just think that when you have a conversation with someone from that culture, the eye contact, they're very caring, I think they take things very personally, and hold things deep, like deep emotionally.
R
You really think that.
MK
I do. I really do. I think it's their culture. (MK 598-605)

Candidates' positive reactions to interviewers are an important aspect of a successful interview. When interviewers convey the impression of being cultural savvy in an interview, the candidates' feeling of being accepted is increased.

I'm not sure whether it's truthful to say that, but I do know that some interviewers are racist. They prefer to work with people from the same background ( )
R
Why do you think that is so? Why do they prefer people from their own background?
C03
Some people, you can tell from their appearance, they want to, like the way that they communicate is not that nice, and so you can have the feeling they're not accept you.

254

R
So it's just a feeling that you have.
C03
It is a feeling.
R
And the way they behave as well.
C03
The way they behave but MC doesn't have that. (C03 647-661)

Cultural savvy influences a candidate's confidence in an interview.

*A bit probably, yeah I need to like improve, it's like I need to get more
knowledge about the culture in here, probably it's like ( ) so next time when I go
for interview, like I can offer like, how to say that, yeah, probably more
confident. (C06 506-508)*

An interviewer's cultural savvy can have a positive effect on candidates.

*Well, they achieve the purpose in the sense that, in, I came away feeling
comfortable and I felt, you know, good about the interview. And, and I suppose
on their part, they could, sort of, relate to another person that's probably, you
know, from a different culture. (C07 396-398)*

SUMMARY

In summary, the influence of interviewers' and candidates' cultural savvy is an

external cause that is often underestimated by the interviewers but frequently cited by

the candidates as impacting on the candidates' interview performance. Cultural savvy

may be lost if cultural awareness and knowledge are not translated into cultural skills.

Hence, the ability to adapt to the other person's culture is a very important aspect of

being cultural savvy. The cultural savvy of both the interviewer and candidate

contributed much to the success of the only candidate in the interviews, C10, to be offered a position. Cultural savvy significantly influenced perceptions of many of the candidates' personal qualities, KSA, and professional assets. They also affected the candidates' confidence in the interviews. Cultural savvy can be acquired and is the responsibility of candidates and interviewers. For example, C10 acquired behavioural interview techniques and became the only successful candidate in the research sample. An interviewer's cultural savviness is mediated by the interviewer's exposure to other cultures, a need for the candidate to possess strong customer service and sale skills, and the interviewer's cultural stereotypes. A candidate's cultural savvy can be influenced by the candidate's length of stay in Australia, prior training in culture and cross-cultural communication, and interview experience.

4.1.3. Interviewers' behaviours

Definition: attitude, conduct, behaviour and impressions of interviewers.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
interviewers' behaviours	1	9	42	27

interviewers' behaviours
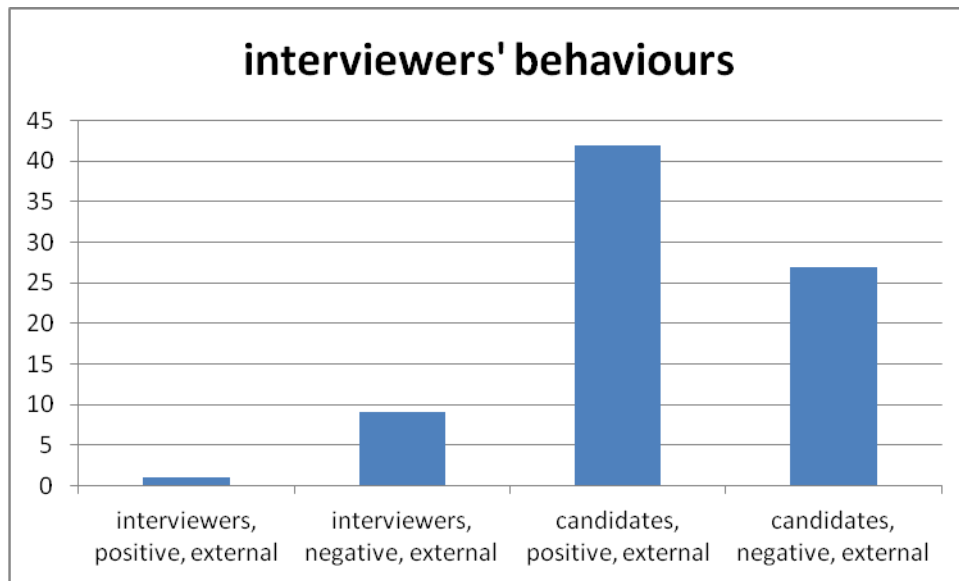
Interviewers' behaviour affects candidates' behaviour (Anderson, 1992; Liden, Martin and Parsons, 1993). Their warmth, unfriendliness, job knowledge, general competence and humour can impact on the candidates' state of anxiety (Carless and Imber, 2007). An external factor, interviewers' behaviour is the third strongest factor to influence perceptions. However, the influence of this factor on candidates' perceptions is far greater than on the interviewers' perceptions. In other words, interviewers tend to be unaware of the great influence of their behaviour on candidates. The influence of interviewers' behaviour on candidates is much more positive than negative, which suggests that much of an interviewer's unconscious behaviour is positive. The literature shows that when interviewers limit their talking time, and use nonverbal and verbal reinforcement, this generally indirect approach encourages candidates to open up and talk about themselves (Dipboye and Macan, 1988). Interviewers' behaviour is a strong mediating factor on interview outcomes, and it can be decisive.

IMPACT ON CANDIDATES

Interviewers' openness, friendliness, and cultural sensitivity can have a significant

influence on candidates' confidence in interviews.

> *It's fine for me ( ) Because they not very strict, they are not very angry about why*
> *when you say something wrong. They won't angry, they won't just make you*
> *nervous, they try to make you pleasant. (C02 711-713)*

> *… if you had gone to another interview where, where you feel intimidated, or you*
> *felt that, you know, and you can tell from the body language I think. [R: OK.] I*
> *mean I have experienced with other interviews where, where the way they ask,*
> *you know, I felt as if they were trying to intimidate [R: ah] because they think*
> *that, you know that, they know everything and you should know before you apply*
> *for the job, so that, that's that's not a good experience. But this, this was a good*
> *experience. (C04 247-252)*

The professionalism of an interviewer's approach can also influence candidates'

perceptions.

> *Yeah, but personally I feel she's a bit tolerant, easy talking, from the way [R:*
> *Easy to get on] yeah, yeah, and and very professional. (C08 182-184)*

Interviewers' ability to relate to people of other cultures is also cited as an important

influence on candidates in an interview.

> *… and I suppose on their part, they could, sort of, relate to another person that's*
> *probably, you know, from a different culture. (C07 396-397)*

The availability of interviewers' feedback influences how candidates feel about an interview.

> *I was getting good vibes from them, good nice vibe, didn't feel like there was, there was no barrier, everything was going well. (C01 472-474)*

Where candidates perceive that an interviewer do not attempt to build rapport, the candidates become less comfortable.

> *Yeah, it'll make me a lot more comfortable. Just going ahead with the interview and speaking to them about something not subject to the interview. It might build up confidence build up kind of interest of each other. I think it helps if the interviewer initiates it. (C09 139-141)*

An example shows the interviewer not making an effort to build rapport with the candidate.

> *Any plan for the weekend?*
> *MJ*
> *Not at all mate, not at all [C09: OK.] whatever the wife tells me to do, I just do it, so I don't make plans, I just follow. You're not married yet, you've got plenty of time to dictate what you want to do on a weekend.*
> *C09*
> *Still have a girlfriend, so, it's a bit like that too.*
> *MJ*
> *Yes, yes, it is a bit like that. So um alright, so just, obviously this is your resume (S09 6-14)*

Interviewers are aware that their talking speed can cause candidates to become nervous and that patience is helpful to the candidates.

I know I'm probably doing it now. I tend to speak fairly fast naturally. I like to do that. I need to pull myself back at times. Because it may, I mean obviously I would get through the interview quicker and may also make the candidate little bit uneasy at times, so that's something I do need to work on. (ME 334-337)

The influence of impatience is seen in the following extract.

OK. cool ur like sometimes when, when there are lots of customers waiting in line [ME: yes] and there is, we are short of staff and ur so if's, really a, a difficult situation for, for us to balance [ME: yes ((hurried tone?))] but there is only one people for me to handle, like all the clients at, um during the peak hours, at five o'clock in, in the afternoon. And what I did is ur there, there are like three cus- customers, or maybe four customers, four, five customers in line [ME: yep], and I told one of them, um I call on the phone to to tell my colleagues that I, I'm getting busy, if there is some people available, come to the deli [ME: OK.], I will really appreciate it, and then some staff will be coming and helping me [ME: right]. And, and at the same time some customers they um at once, there are customers ask asking for for for a kind of ham pork burgers and he ask for, very simple, for me to slice instead of giving them from the window [ME: OK.], I just tell, all the other customers to be patient and wait for a few ur a few more minutes, maybe three more minutes [ME: yep]. And then I just take out those burgers, a pack of burgers from the cool room [ME: yep] and then do the slicing for them [ME: OK.] because I ( ) [ME: so you gave him what he wanted?]] yeah, yeah, and it takes only three minutes long [ME: yep] cause I'm profi- um efficient in doing that [ME: OK., good] yeah and ur and ur in balancing my work ((this paragraph was spoken much quicker, with some nervousness?)). (S05 219-235)

The length of an interview and the number of questions asked have varying influence on the candidates.

Probably the job interview, they finally interview only 14 minutes. It's not long enough for someone to explain themselves properly. Someone probably may can answer questions, not just speak other things they might think of. (C02 351-353)

At the end of the day she wants to find the best person that can do the job. That's why she gave me so many questions. So I found that I think it's a bit too much.
R
Overwhelming?
C04
Yeah, that's the correct word, overwhelming is just, yeah. (C04 412-418)

The size and gender of the composition of the interview panel can also have some influence on the candidates.

I think if possible two interviewers, would be, like one male, one female. Because male and female, their perspective different. (C08 745-746)

So I don't know, what was that about. But overall improvement I'd say, maybe one on one interview would be better. I feel more comfortable with one on one. (C09 840-841)

IMPACT ON INTERVIEWERS

Interviewers' tolerance, acceptance and personal preferences influence their perceptions of candidates' English language ability.

It can, it can, I know I'm very tolerant and accepting of it, and because I spent a lot of time with them I understand them, but with customers you have a 30 second interaction with them, how will that be perceived. (MK 304-306)

Interviewers' personal preferences can also influence their perceptions of the quality of candidates' verbal responses. For example, some interviewers prefer candidates to share more of their personal life in an interview, although this does not reduce the importance of work information.

I was probably looking for something personal. So a bit about him, like I, I've got this information on his resume, and I'm looking for him to open up to me about the type of person he is, what he likes to do or, what, you know, if he's married or, or got kids or, or just a bit little bit of background about him. Not, I don't want him to define himself by his degree or his job, but I want to know about C10. And his response, is quite standard of a candidate, just to say what I've done, not what I am, if that makes sense? (MK 401-406)

An interviewer's control of the interview can have significant influence, and a lack of control results in negative perceptions of candidates.

I couldn't control that interview and they were my exact words when I walked out, I couldn't control the interview, I didn't want to speak over him so we let him talk, we weren't going to stop him and say OK. that's enough talking we just went oh OK. that's where it went wrong I think. (MB 314-317)

An interviewer's prejudice can lead them to prejudge candidates' English language ability.

I thought they have the ideas, they not good at English, they not good at communicating with people, and this is saw your name. They think, Oh from Asia. If I saw name, I don't know, it's how China, or Hong Kong, because different name ( ) people come from which part, Japan? From the Korean? This name, I know you from Asian. (C02 798-801)

SUMMARY

In summary, the interviewers' attitudes, approaches and behaviours in the interview have important consequences for interview rapport, candidates' confidence, and perceptions of the candidates' communication skills and abilities. Important

interviewers characteristics are control of the interview, feedback, openness, professional presentation, and cultural sensitivity. Candidates are more positive than negative in their perceptions of interviewers, and this suggests that the interviewers are conducting themselves in appropriate ways in the interviews. However, more needs to be done. Candidates' preferences regarding the way an interview is conducted can influence the impact of an interviewer's behaviour on candidates.

4.1.4. Career alignment

Definition: career fit between role and candidates' ability, education, passion and future direction.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
career alignment	24	35	9	6
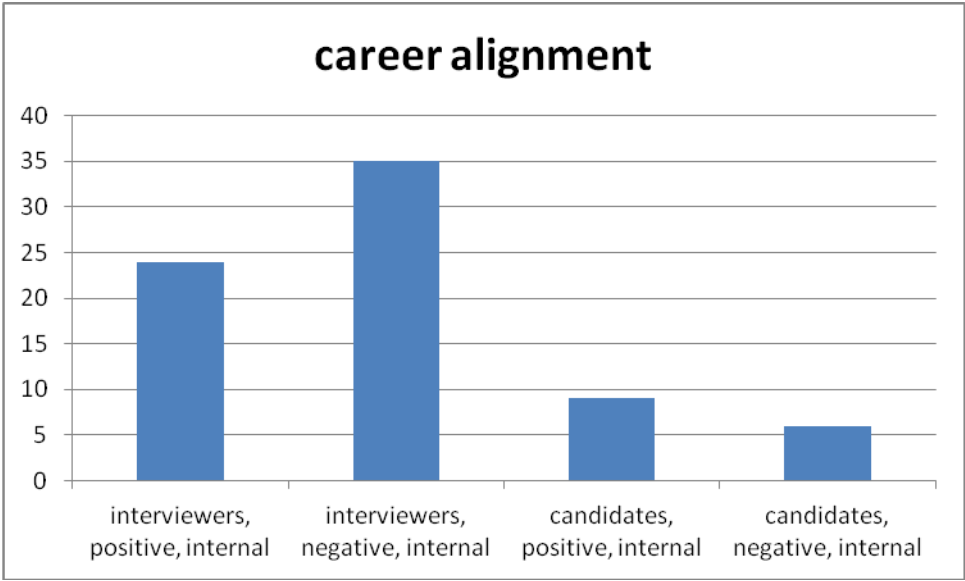
Career alignment is the second strongest internal factor to influence interviewers and candidates in an interview. It is a factor that has a far greater influence on the interviewers than the candidates, and the influence is more negative than positive. In other words, the candidates underestimate the significance of career alignment on interviewers' perceptions of their suitability for roles. Career alignment is a decisive factor on interview outcomes.

Career alignment assesses the fit between a candidate's passion for the role, the organisation and industry.

> *I always like people that sound really passionate and I think he sounded really passionate about his background, his background is in finance, he sounded really passionate about the industry (ML 111-113)*

Evidence of interviewers' concern about a lack of passion for a role is reflected in the following extract.

> *yep. Just ask you a question [C03: yep]. Are you happy to go from a very sort of accounting, data entry, very analytical background [C03: yep] into something that would, like our goal is very client [C03: yes, yes] focused. It's going to be taking calls and [C03: yep] not much of that data entry, not, it's analytical in the sense that you have to help clients solve problems [C03: mm] but it's not analytical [C03: mm] in the sense that you're solving numbers [C03: mm] and looking at a lot of reports. Like we don't do applications so it's not like you're going to be [C03: mm] looking too much of the credit risk side [C03: mm] of the company [C03: yeah]. Is that something that you're happy to do, or? (S03 185-192)*

Passion for the role itself is particularly critical and overrides the importance of passion for the organisation and the industry.

... everyone can say, my dream is to work in a bank, but why do you want to work in a bank, what is your passion about it, what's your drive behind it. (ML 665-666)

Interviewers must be convinced that candidates want the job that they are applying for.

They got to sell themselves a little bit more at the interview. It's my decision to take them on. It's not the fact that you know some people turn up at the interview going you can't do without me and they really got to engage in the conversation that I have no other choice but to pick that person. So they got to sell themselves in a way that they really want the job. I wasn't convinced that he really wanted the job. He wanted the job in the bank but he didn't want the job that he applied for. (MJ 724-729)

Lack of passion for the role, but passion for the organisation, are perceived negatively by interviewers, because candidates are perceived to be merely using the role as a stepping stone into other job opportunities in the organisation.

Is it for a stepping stone, or is it for, you wanna come here and you wanna learn about this, you want to progress in this area or you just using it to step to other areas. So just to see, by them coming here they're not wasting their time as well. (MA 217-220)

Career alignment also takes into account candidates' ability to fill the role, their possession of relevant experience, and the way they fit with the team.

I would have expected the outcome to be a decision as to whether she was suitable for the role or not, her experience was relevant, if she had a passion for customer service, and it was something that she really wanted to do and, a fit

with a particular team that you know, find her getting satisfaction from the position also. (MH 100-103)

For candidates, career alignment also concerns their person-job fit.

My concern was the role itself. I didn't think the role would suit, doesn't really match my true ability. From what I've experienced, from the skills that I've learnt, (C01 134-136)

Career alignment is more than just the fit between the candidate, job and organisation. Career alignment takes into account the future career direction of the candidate.

And I just thought not necessarily over qualified but, for her skills match and what sort of experience she had, and where she wants to go (MC 130-131)

Interviewers have a pragmatic reason for this view.

As I said, you automatically think coming through the door, then you get what you want, and that means that I invest, the bank wins at the end of the day, but I lose. (MF 201-202)

The above analysis also suggests that over-qualification is an indicator for lack of career alignment. This is further supported by the extract below.

I do. It depends on their degrees. That was my initial thought. I thought she's a very smart girl and on the intellectual level I'm sure she got a very very high I.Q. So what's her motivation for down the track I think that's when you really start asking questions. My job pays here is about 38,000 a year for a start. Her education background she'd probably be demanding probably about 70 to 75 thousand out in the market if she used her skills. (MF 162-166)

Over-qualification is also seen in candidates' work history.

266

Like some people wanted to come to the bank to get the foot in the door, work in an associate for a few months, work for the AFSO, then go for a graduate program. In all honesty I thought she was already there. (MC 142-144)

Candidates in general understand the importance of person-job and person-organisation fit, but they underestimate or overlook the significance of career fit.

To assess the candidates, to see whether their skills and knowledge are suitable for this position, whether their personal attributes match the company's culture. And see whether to have the ability to grow in the future. (C03 335-337)

The only successful candidate in the research sample, however, recognised the critical importance of passion for the job and career alignment in the interviewers' hiring decision.

To try, as AFSO try to get the person's passion is most important, (C10 884)

This suggests that candidates must be clear about their future career goals and direction.

Because everyone should have goals, if you don't have goals, you can't work hard for the current job, (C10 220-221)

A career goal has to be in line with the role being applied for, which presents a problem for Chinese candidates if, as a result of their culture, they think that an interviewer will consider the candidates' career path to be the interviewers' concern and not the candidates'. C10 describes the attitude of the Chinese manager as follows:

You don't need to think about futures, and if you are capable of doing what you do now, I will make decision to you, I will put you through to high position, but this kind of position is not your concern now, so please (C10 1017-1018)

Another reason why candidates overlook the importance of career alignment may be because of their concern with other factors in their employment decisions.

It was the idea of, there were a few things that went through my mind, is that I was trying to analyse all the different factors that got me the reasons to apply. So the factors would be, they advertised as part time, fact that it was flexible, the fact that it was in the city, (C01 122-125)

Candidates also emphasised getting into the finance industry to pursue their career, and with a lack of emphasis on pursuing the job role itself, they were negatively perceived as using the role as a stepping stone.

I think it is a step stone for me to enter into a finance industry. It's an entrance level job, contact centre. It's a great stepping-stone for me. (C03 107-108)

In summary, career alignment is a very important influence on interviewers' perceptions and hiring decisions, with implications for managers' financial bottom-line. The above analysis indicates that the interviewers considered it very important that the employment of the candidate was first and foremost to fulfil the requirements of the role, and that the candidate must be committed to working within the business area as a career. While passion contributed greatly to the interviewers' positive perceptions, over-qualification contributed to negative perceptions. The importance of career alignment was greatly underestimated by the candidates. Several factors influenced the perception of career alignment. These factors will be discussed

elsewhere in this chapter. They are education, work experience and culture, poor verbal ability, English language skills, and interview preparation, all of which contribute to poor perceptions of career alignment. Career alignment is a decisive influence on interview outcomes.

4.1.5. English language

Definition: standard Australian English used in the interviews.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
English language	10	36	0	24
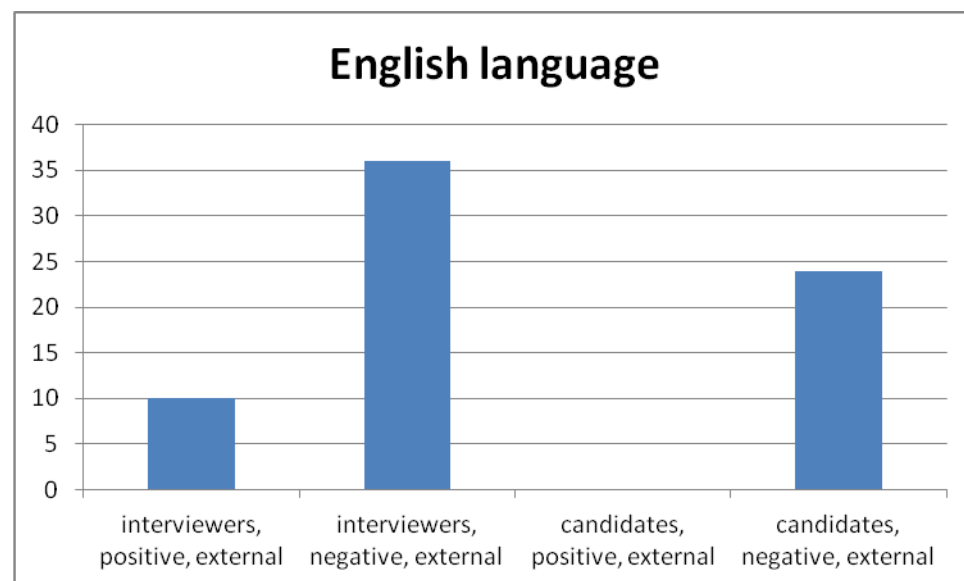
English is the de facto language of the global economy (Otlowski, 2008) and spoken fluency influences cross-cultural perceptions (Vrij and Winkel, 1994). English language ability was the third strongest external factor to influence the interviewers and candidates in the interviews. This factor had a greater influence on the

269

interviewers' than on the candidates' perceptions, while the perceptions of both were more negative than positive. In other words, the interviewers place much more emphasis on the candidates' English than the candidates themselves did, and the candidates underestimated its influence on the interviewers. English language ability had a strong influence on some of the other factors in the interviews, e.g., the behavioural interview, candidates' confidence, and interviewers' confusion. It was a decisive factor on interview outcomes.

Characterised by comprehension and fluency, English language ability contributed to candidates' confidence and interviewers' positive perceptions.

> *Very well. As I said his level of English language skill was very good. I don't think at any time he really misunderstood the questions. (MD 213-214)*

Lack of English language ability greatly impacted on the candidates' confidence in the interviews.

> *That's the problem that I am not that confident, especially for local people interview overseas like candidates like me. In English level, we are not so as much fluent speaker as them. (C03 557-559)*

Fluency is evidenced by the ability of candidates to make themselves understood by the interviewers.

> *You can understand him, but it was, you had to really concentrate and sometimes he'll probably just get you a bit confused because, I think he probably found it hard to express what he was trying to say. I think that's all it was ... Sometimes you could get a bit side tracked because he couldn't find the proper words to*

reply back to it, so I think that's where he kind of struggled just a bit. (MB 132-137)

The data extracted below illustrates the difficulty that MB had with C02. The candidate's response highlights his lack of comprehension of the interviewer's question, and also shows his lack of fluency in the English language.

> *... what kinda motivates you?*
> *C02*
> *ur I've chosen ur I've chosen different banking ur more important in here, is just that the people is very dynamic ur everyone tells ur with AFSO, very dynamic. It doesn't, not, not like the Harvey Norman, because I'm working in Harvey Norman, even as a manager, they ur still ur I can hear lots of complaint from my employee, from, from employee at Harvey Norman [MB: yeah] from my staff [MB: mm mm] 'Because ah that's too boring'. Even they still make a lot of ur what can we say ((clicks fingers)) ur shares, ur, ur money, around 2000 dollars a week, they still complain because of work doesn't match their lifestyle [MB: OK.] And ur, ur working banking system, that's my interest ah [MB: mm mm] ur instead of working IT, it's too boring for me (S02 67-77)*

While it is obvious that comprehension and fluency has a direct impact on interviews, it is also a critical requirement for customer service roles.

> *... we are in a phone sales environment, it may be hard sometimes for somebody who doesn't speak fluent English to be on the phones. (MA 761-763)*

The bottom line remains that candidates must have a sufficient level of language ability to interview successfully for roles (Rings, 2006). However, only a certain level of comprehension and fluency, rather than excellence, is required. The following extract highlights the level of fluency that is acceptable to an interviewer, and is supported by the extract from the interview with the interviewer ME.

271

Oh, AFSO is really a large company [ME: yep] in Australia. And ur it has a huge image um in the financial environment [ME: sure] in Australia. And ur and ur values people very well and can recognise people's efforts in the company [ME: OK.]. So it's really a good company for me to apply to and to start my career. (S05 35-38)

I thought he had articulated himself quite well. He did give examples, specific ones. He listened to me. (ME 245-246)

The interviewers' perceptions of the candidates' level of comprehension and fluency were positive for the three most articulate candidates, C01, C04 and C06; however, they were often not completely satisfied with the rest of the eight candidates, who had above average, average or below average comprehension and fluency. Nevertheless, interviewers can find candidates with average levels of comprehension and fluency in English acceptable.

I expected that he wouldn't have as good English skills as he did, so I didn't expect as much from it as actually came out of it. (MD 137-138)

The interviewers' negative perceptions of the candidates' fluency mainly concerned the candidates' struggle to find appropriate words and their sentence construction.

Like this sentence, I'm quite helping, quite happy to help with people, it's not really like great English, an Australian person would say, I enjoy helping, I'm really happy to help people, but it really didn't make a difference because knew what he was saying. (ML 436-438)

The following extract illustrates the candidate's struggle mentioned by MB in the passage quoted above.

And ur previously I work in Harvey Norman [MB: Alright, yep], as a sales manager [MB: OK.]. And ur previous to that, I'm work in my friend's company [MB: yep] as a help desk, desk help [MB: OK.] and ur customer as well [MB: Right]. So, so, as my local, because I've got my own local business banker, BB [MB: Oh, alright, OK.] ur he told me, probably because, I, I told him, I'm really wants to work in bank system [MB: yep] to get experience [MB: aha], because finally ur business just other part of my life. I'm more likely to work in a, like the role, like BB, BB work as well. (S02 40-46)

The candidates were aware of and willing to take responsibility for their lack of comprehension and fluency in the interviews.

So, I think every questions asked, I can answer properly, not accurate but properly. (C02 147)

Language naturally had a direct influence on candidates' performance regarding the verbal factor.

Sometimes, sometimes, if you are familiar with the way they talk, you will get your ideas directly, but sometimes the words or sentence, or the order or words is not that familiar with you, cause everyone got a different expression ways, you have to translate, you know translate from Chinese, then Chinese probably translate to English, so it kinda slow down. (C10 924-927)

Poor language fluency can positively influence an interviewer's perceptions and evaluations of a candidate's culturally inappropriate behaviour (Molinsky, 2005). In the extract below, the candidate had average language comprehension and fluency, yet, on the whole, the interviewer found the candidate acceptable.

273

... we know that he didn't interview very well, so we could acknowledge that, there was that either language barrier or differences, but I knew, what I saw in C10 was what I wanted. I knew that but it's hard for me to put into words. I felt that I got what I wanted out of the interview to know that he was the right person for the branch, even though his words weren't might not have been enough, I can tell in his demeanour and his behaviour and the way that he said things, that he was the right person. (MK 266-271)

On the other hand, poor fluency can cause interviewers to become confused in interviews.

Why he wants to work in the AFSO and I know he did explain it but I was still confused. (MB 439)

It can also result in a candidate losing confidence in an interview.

I will have my sense of confidence in terms of the language, like the ability to talk like we are similar so I'm not afraid. (C03 573-575)

Significantly, behavioural interview responses, which are a key feature of the critical verbal factor, are influenced by the candidates' comprehension and fluency.

Yeah, you know what, the way he answers questions is kinda similar to what C10 did as well, the way that they kinda like no building rapport, just comes in with facts, it's like he's just reading from a piece of paper, there's no building rapport, I honestly think, it's because you put them on the spot, and they've just got these facts sitting in their head, and because like the language, particularly with C11, like the language isn't that great, so he's probably just coming out with things that he remembers in his head, I don't know, that's what I imagine. (ML 822-829)

274

In summary, English language comprehension and fluency is important not only for the interview itself to be effective, but is also important as an indication of a cadidate's ability to fulfil the job role for which he or she is applying. Its impact on interviewers and candidates has repercussions for other factors – e.g., the behavioural interview – which are critical for interview success. Many factors, however, influence interviewers' perceptions about a candidate's English language ability. This is seen in the way candidates attribute their perceptions, which is quite different from the way interviewers make these attributions. Taking the extreme example of C02 and MB, while C02 attributed only 10 percent of his interview performance to his lack of comprehension and fluency, one of his interviewers, MB, attributed his failure in the interview almost exclusively to his lack English language ability.

> *10 percent is not very good because I have to think. I cannot response to the questions straight away. Cause I just thinking, like the translate. Like the document translate from my tape, like the I'm thinking how to response this question properly. (C02 152-154)*

> *I thought C02 was so smart. To tell you the truth, I knew he had an IT background, he mentioned it a few times, and it's also on his resume, so I picked up on that. I knew that he was very smart, but whether he was good for the job, because what happened, cause we're more of a call centre over here, we require people to talk to other people over the phone. It makes things harder so if he can't really understand when you're face to face, it's going to be very hard for our customers to understand the other person on the other side over the phone so, but otherwise I thought he was like he was very intelligent, very, very intelligent cause I knew he was telling us about how he works at Harvey Norman, how he runs the shop over there, he does it face to face so I'm sure it's easier for him to understand and especially when he's got a product that he can kind of, that's the only reason that's what let him down (MB 176-186)*

Deeper analysis of the data reveals that candidates are very aware of their own lack of

comprehension and fluency and, like the interviewers, they attribute this to an internal cause, i.e., lack of English language ability.

> *Yeah, but when I looking for a job three, four years ago, everyone from China, from Asian. experience the same problem. English speaking not very good, have to get ourselves credit for the speaking, we have to communicate with speaking, (C02 658-660)*

However, candidates' self-awareness of their own weakness in this regard was also revealed when they were asked how the interview might have been experienced differently if the interviewers had been of the same culture as their own. Other influences on perceptions of the candidates' English language ability were the interviewers' behaviour, the quality of interviewers' questions, role confusion, and factors concerned with customer service and sales. These will be discussed in their respective sections.

4.1.6. Interview efficacy

Definition: a candidates' degree of interviewing confidence, the ability to adapt to an interviewer's behaviour, and a willingness to try hard at interviews.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
interview efficacy	16	8	29	7
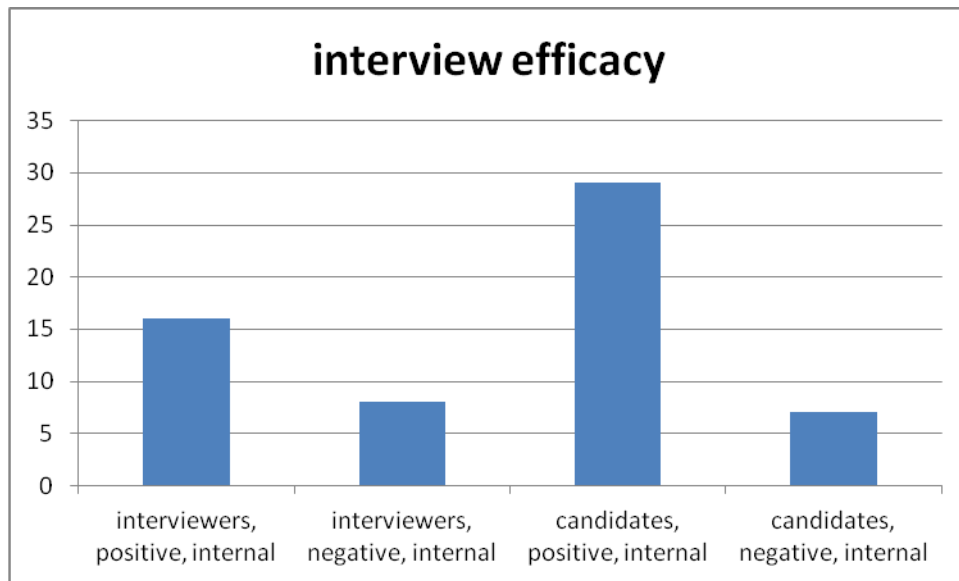
Interview efficacy, specifically confidence, is a predictor of job search success where it is positively related to the number of job offers (Young and Kacmar, 1998; Saks, 2006). In this study, interview efficacy was the third most important internal factor to influence the interviewers and candidates in the interviews. Interview efficacy relates to the candidates' confidence as well as their interview preparation and experience. Interview efficacy is a moderately strong factor the influence of which is greater on the candidates than on the interviewers, and which influences both the candidates and the interviewers more positively than negatively. Interview efficacy is a mediating factor on outcomes for the interviewers, but for the candidates it is decisive.

Interview efficacy is very much about having self-confidence, believing in one's ability to interview well, trying one's best in the interview, and being able to adapt to the interviewers.

> *I usually go into interviews quite confidently, to be honest with you, I'm actually quite confident. (C01 154-155)*

I could feel that she was giving her all. (MC 545)

Yes, yes, probably I do that, maybe unconsciously I will adapt. (C01 1201)

Confidence is a key component of interview efficacy and is important because it affects the interviewers' judgement of how the candidates may be viewed by customers, and of the candidates' suitability for the role.

The only reason it impacted on me is because, for this job type, we're really needing people that you know can give good customer service, so you know, if they are very shy (MC 998-999)

Being overly confident or overly laid back is not helpful, but quiet confidence is.

The way that she presented herself, she was quite confident in the way that she contained herself as well and also when she provided me with the answers to the questions I asked. She was very, self-assured, quietly confident, that was a nice thing. (MI 102-104)

Over-confidence is perceived negatively by interviewers when candidates ask the wrong question.

How can you tell when someone is over-confident?
MA
Sometimes the way they talk to you. They almost switch around and start saying things.
We had one person who, what did they do, at the end of the interview, he said, so when do I start? when do I have the job? and he was an OK. interview. (MA 205-209)

An example of over-confidence that impacted negatively on the interviewer is shown in the follow extract.

> *If I were successful, when do I start?*
> *MJ*
> *We will start ringing your referee.*
> *C09*
> *OK. when would I start?*
> *MJ*
> *Well, again it's sort of subject to us agreeing that we think there's a future for you (S09 853-859)*

Interviewers perceive confidence in a candidate's body language and extroversion.

> *They kind of they're not looking, and I'm doing it now in an interview, say you're talking to me a lot, somebody who like kinda keeps eye contact. You can look away a bit but not so much, like when I'm talking to someone I don't want them just be looking at this side of the room, like have a bit of confidence and try. (MA 262-265)*

> *I suppose, if you can look at confidence being that way he was a little less outgoing than I suppose I would have expected. (MD 275-276)*

Lack of confidence is seen in nervousness and introversion, often revealed in the candidate's incessant talk and shyness, which is perceived as cultural.

> *I think he just kept talking about what he wants to talk about, cause maybe he just didn't understand what we were trying to get out of him, and maybe he was so nervous as well at the same time. (MB 202-204)*

> *Probably things like, how they communicate as well. Like you know whether they're going to be overly smiley, just that sort of I guess body language and like*

facial body language, like how, I've had a few interviews with Asian backgrounds candidates, and sometimes I felt, you know, they weren't overly friendly in an interview, and they weren't smiling as much, or you know more shy than other people. (MC 990-994)

Candidates can try to stay confident by saying what they believe in and by being organised.

Not just try and find the right thing to say. Just to say the right things that you believe, cause the manager will be able to, they'll be able to notice that. (C01 326-327)

I think I still got a little bit nervous, I speak fast, and not quite organised, I prepare well, but when it comes the interview sometimes, you can't, control yourself, speaking speed, is I should improve. (C10 1057-1059)

The last extract also suggests that confidence is not something that can always be controlled. Nervousness can also have an unhelpful effect on a candidate's manner of speaking, such as speaking quickly or talking excessively.

I think that it was nerves that made him kept talking and talking and talking, it's like he just wanted to talk and talk and talk, thinking that it is going to be better off if he just talks, talks, talks. (MA 477-479)

Nervousness can be caused by a candidate's subjective feeling that they have not provided a good answer, or are unable to answer a question.

I didn't answer this question very well, and I became stressed after this question, so my confidence level went down. If I answer the first question very good, then I think my confidence level will be better. (C03 509-511)

Yeah, 18. So many black spots that I need to fill in and I wish, I wasn't able to.
R
What do you mean black spots? What did you want to fill in?
C04
I wanted to fill in the answers but it was too overwhelming at that time so it was hard to come to terms off. (C04 536-540)

Confidence can be improved by interview experience, work experience and interview preparation.

... it's also possible he's got a lack of experience in interviews. But showing confidence is always a good thing. (MD 279-280)

Actually, like so so. I didn't prepare that much, so a bit stressed [R: a bit stress] for the interview. (C03 69-70)

In summary, interview efficacy, particularly confidence, is influenced by many internal and external factors. Interviewers and candidates differ in their perceptions of what builds confidence, with the interviewers attributing many of their perceptions to internal factors, and the candidates attributing theirs to external factors. The influential factors were extroversion, interview preparation and experience, nonverbal and verbal factors, candidates' questions, English language fluency, the interviewer's attitude and behaviour, the physical environment, pre-interview conditions, and culture. These factors will be discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter.

4.1.7. Customer service and sales

Definition: candidate's knowledge and ability in providing customer service and sales; it includes product knowledge, relationship building skills, and conflict handling.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
customer service and sales	26	23	0	4
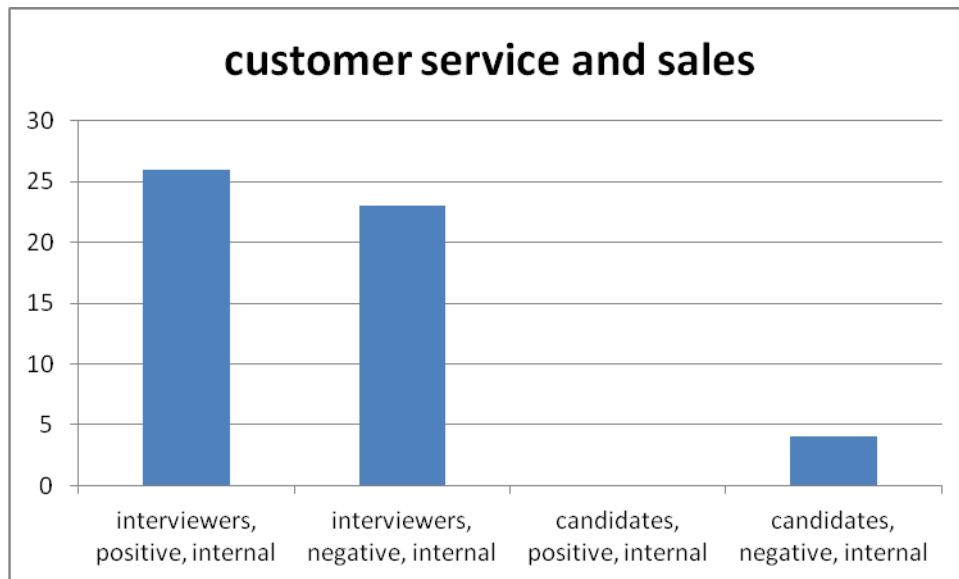
An internal factor, customer service and sales is a moderately strong factor influencing perceptions in an interview. The factor is significantly more influential on the perceptions of the interviewers than on those of the candidates. In fact, the interviewers place significantly greater emphasis on candidates' customer service and sales capacity than the candidates realise. This factor includes the ability of the candidates to handle conflict with customers. Customer sales and service is a decisive factor on outcomes.

The data show that interviewers are concerned about the ability of candidates to liaise and build relationships with customers. This skill is core to providing customer service and sales, and is therefore influential in the interviewers' hiring decisions.

... the role we're looking at is customer facing, and was also apart from customer service it was also very much a sales based role as well. (MD 79-81)

As well as on relationship building, customer relationships in AFSO are centred on a balance between providing service and making a sale.

Yeah and his answer to that was he likes selling products, finance related product, is very very interesting to me, and I feel that I will be very good at it, so it's very sales-based, there's no real, like I find that too in a lot of his answers is very sales focus, not at all customer service focus, it should be a combination of the two, you know what I mean, the way people should be answering the question should be a combination of the sales and customer service because it's a joint thing, because we want to find out the needs of the customers and then just products and services from there. (ML 673-679)

The extract below shows a role-play between the interviewer acting as a customer and the candidate acting as a customer service representative. The role-play shows the candidate successfully attempting to balance his role in service and sales.

Hi, ML, how are you?
ML
Hi, I'm good, thank you. I just need to deposit 500 dollars into my account, thank you.
C10
Oh, OK. OK. you are currently using the transaction account, or ...((tapers off)).
ML
ah yeah, I need to put them all ... ((C10 interrupts)).
C10
... transaction account [ML: yeah] are you interested in the ur SSS account? It's a new product of the bank [ML: OK.] it's got a, many advantages, like you have more interest for your account, quite convenience, there's actually no account fees for the account, the SSS account.
ML
So how much is the interest rate?

C10

It's current three point seven five per cent per annum [ML: OK.] calculated daily and put into your account monthly [ML: OK.]

ML

OK. well I'm in a bit of a hurry, that's all, I don't know if I have the time.

C10

That's fine, ur, that's my business card, if you're really interest on that, you can call me, or you can call in our branch next time [ML: mm] I will explain more clearly what is the account [ML: mm] and also, there is a booklet for the product.

ML

mm OK. alright, I'm just not too sure like, why, like, how is it going to benefit me, like?

C10

Is there any product that you …?

ML

Well, you know, I know I get the interest rate [C10: yeah] and everything like that [C10: yeah] but ur is it far easier for me to have it in my current account.

C10

ur because your account currently has got low interest rate [ML: zero] it is like cash account [ML: mm] but the term deposit comparable with NBS account is different to your account [ML: alright] SSS account has bit of advantage in the middle, it's got many things, easy to deal with.

ML

OK. that sounds great. Thank you ((slight laugh)). (S10 198-235)

From the data analysis it appears that candidates often underestimate the value of their customer service experience and over-value their sales achievement. This is reflected in the data extract below.

If I answer that again, I may mention more more the sales, the sales achievement, like I mention before. (C11 587-588)

This presents a problem for the Chinese candidates, who may be influenced by their culture, where sales is more important than customer service.

> *I think in China probably they more care able sales part then customer service part than Australia. (C10 567-568)*

Sales are very much dictated by customer needs and achieved through a process of investigation.

> *... see I like the way, when we were talking about sales, I don't want to hear that someone is going to put the hard sale on people, when he is talking about sales, he is talking about discovering the needs of the person, trying to ask them questions, and then giving them options, the different products and services that we have, so like that's our approach, if he already has that knowledge, that's great, that approach is excellent. (ML 221-225)*

The sales process has priority over sales targets, although this does not mean the need to meet targets is unimportant.

> *He wasn't successful due to I suppose a lack of evidence of having to work in a busy environment and still meet sales targets. (ME 78-79)*

Another aspect of customer service and sales is business acumen.

> *I like to use the words I'm afraid, or I'm afraid, I like not to use the words, no, I cannot, He had a little bit of business acumen but. (MJ 543-544)*

Customer service and sales also requires that candidates understand the business products.

> *Yeah I think so, yeah I just don't think he understand the product that much, so what kind of age group, the young people (ML 811-812)*

Handling customers' complaints is a part of this factor.

> *... here he handled the objection pretty well, when she said that, maybe it was me, she is busy, he said, you can take my business card, giving more information. (ML 303-305)*

Above all, customer service and sales is about exceeding customer expectations, and not discounting the importance of services or the quality of the product.

> *I think we need to provide service which exceeds our customer expectations, which is exactly right (MK 507-708)*

> *So he's actually negotiating on your service [R:yes] and your product [R: OK.] and even though you're probably already providing a premium product. So that tells me that's discounting at any cost. He said look, I'll give you an example, like McDonalds, like there was a really elderly gentleman who you know came in and was really struggling to, to get the waiter to cut up the burger for him, to, there's something that's a little bit left field that you would do. Like you wouldn't think twice about it. (MJ 499-504)*

In summary, customer service and sales is a core capability of the role and is therefore a decisive factor in the interviewer's hiring decision. Customer service takes priority over sales, and the sales process takes priority over sales targets. The perceptions of the candidates' customer service and sales capability are influenced by many factors. These are discussed below in the relevant section of the chapter, and include work experience, the use of behavioural responses to clearly show the evidence for a capability, English language ability, and culture.

4.1.8. Work experience

Definition: a candidate's work history up to the time of the interviews.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
work experience	14	15	6	14
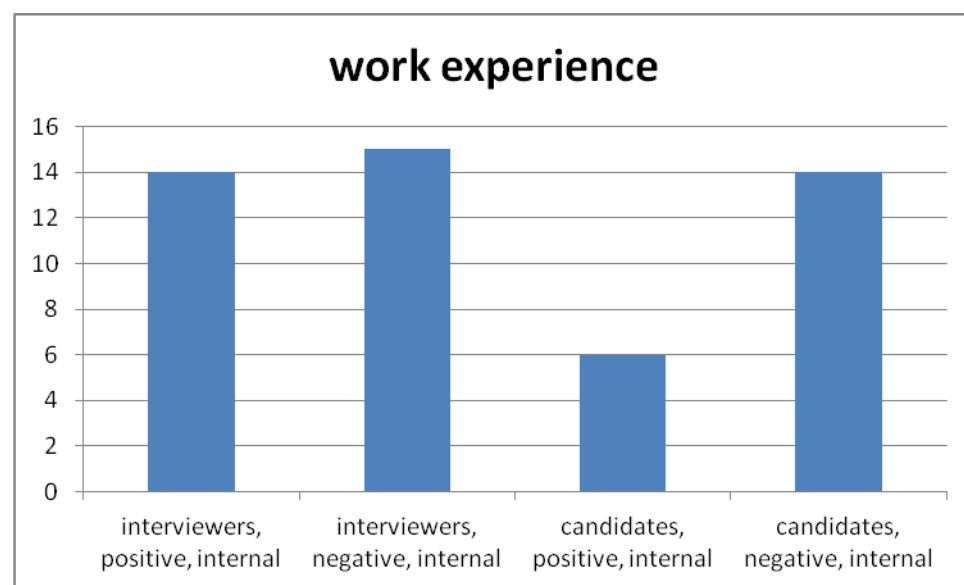
An internal factor, work experience is the third moderately strong factor that has an influence on the perceptions of interviewers and the candidates in an interview. Work history is important, in that it has a direct influence on interviewers' hiring decisions. The literature shows that relevant work experience is an important factor in selection decisions (Bright and Hutton, 2000) because of the skills that can be acquired that are relevant to the roles being interviewed for. This factor has a slightly greater influence on interviewers than on candidates; however, candidates are more inclined to view their work experiences negatively than are the interviewers. In other words,

interviewers place slightly more importance on a candidate's work experience than the candidates realise. Work experience can be a decisive influence on outcomes.

Work experience highlights the importance of relevant skills and industry knowledge for the job role.

> *... he worked at a few different places, news agency and the financial planning firm which I can see correlated very closely, so he had the skills of, cash-handling skills too, so yeah had cash handling skills, had the financial planning background (MK 154-159)*

> *The fact that she has worked in retail before. That's what probably, the first thing I look for is, like in this environment here, it's retail. So if somebody's got back office work experience all their life, it's not going to help me too much at all, so the first thing when I look at people's resume, the first thing I look at is, where they work before. (MF 67-70)*

Work experience is also an indicator of a candidate's work ethics.

> *He's got his own shop. And he didn't look old, he looked quite young and he studied and he's working really hard at Harvey Norman as well. (MB 804-805)*

When candidates lack the relevant work experience, there is a need to invest in their training if they are hired. This is something that businesses are not always able to do.

> *... in this kind of position, in a small branch, that may not have been a problem because they would have time to train him, but we didn't feel that it would be fair to put someone into a full time position in such a large branch when he didn't have that kind of experience, (MD 82-85)*

Irrelevant work experience can cause negative perceptions of candidates' suitability for a role.

For example she was in engineering at one point. So I thought she was very qualified. She was probably over qualified for the job (MH 67-68)

Work experience can also be negative when the environment of the previous employment is not aligned with the culture of the organisation the candidate is applying to join.

... no, that's wrong, serious competition is completely different to what we want our environment to be in the branch, we don't want them to be competing, we want them to work together (ML 772-774)

The amount of relevant work experience can be important for the outcome.

But I think I remember that if he was the person with the most experience, he may have still have got the job (MA 79-80)

Work history also indicates if there is career alignment between the role and the candidate's career direction.

I think this is a bit, when I realise that he was still into, he liked the work he did at ANZ, alright, and if he can get another job similar to the work that he was doing at the ANZ, he'll take in a heartbeat. (MJ 272-274)

Appropriate work experience also helps candidates to answer behavioural questions.

It's not easy, cause you need thinking about your position, some problem solving, it's like, he just describe the situation, you need to give him the answer straight

away, so basically it's not really easy. Like this question he ask me, you must have your real life experience. Without real life experience, it's really hard for you to answer that. (C06 469-472)

When relevant work experience is lacking, the candidate can be disadvantaged regarding the verbal factor. The extract below illustrates the influence that a lack of experience can have on the interview process.

… so a primary need of the role is to successfully meet sales targets on a daily, weekly or monthly basis [ME: sure] OK.? Have you had to achieve sales targets in any of your previous roles that you've held? ((this paragraph was spoken very fast with words stringing all together))
C05
ur there's no sale targets.
ME
No sales target?
C05
For assistant. My manager, have in the deli department [ME: yeah] but I don't.
ME
OK., so, given the fact that you actually haven't had to have sales target before [ME: yeah] how would you, what what would be the process that you'll follow to make sure that you are, able to meet sales targets?(S05 265-278)

Work experience history had a decisive influence on the interview outcomes.

I'll pay him a salary for a while, but he won't hang around too long. He talked about this particular work, so what, so obviously looked at the job, how long he was in there for, he's on a graduate programme, he was there for a while, and then obviously then they pulled the programme, like a lot of people left their jobs. So that sort of gave me an indication. He actually did enjoy the work, I can see it in his face when he was describing it that he thoroughly enjoyed the work. (MJ 278-283)

Candidates were aware of the importance of relevant work experience, particularly skills.

> *They meet because with the role of sales, I've been to sales a couple of years, and now I have my own retail store, same as sales, because two years ago I selling computers, now I selling store stuff, still same, just items, I'm comfortable, I'm very confident, I know how to do the every sales, how to close, how to up-sell, that's where I'm confident at, because the role I apply is to a sales job. (C02 867-871)*

Candidates were conscious of the influence that experience could have on their ability to promote themselves in an interview.

> *Maybe that's a different environment, cause as a teller you, I don't know if they got a sales target, KPI something, so once again, I'm not familiar with their products, I'm not familiar with the front line customer service role, so I don't know how to answer them. (C11 784-786)*

In summary, work experience was an important influence on the perceptions of the candidates' person-job fit, person-organisation fit, and career fit. Work experience needed to be relevant and sufficient. The only moderating influence on work experience was the relative youth of the candidates. All but one were young graduates with relatively limited work experiences. C07 was the exception; she was returning to the workforce after many years of parenting. The position was, however, an entry level role that required relatively less work experience than a mature role. Work experience was nevertheless a decisive factor in the interview outcomes. It also influenced candidates' behavioural responses and other verbal characteristics.

4.1.9. Impressions

Definition: an interviewer's feel for a candidate's personality, abilities, passion for the role, interview readiness, look and professionalism.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
impressions	35	9	0	0
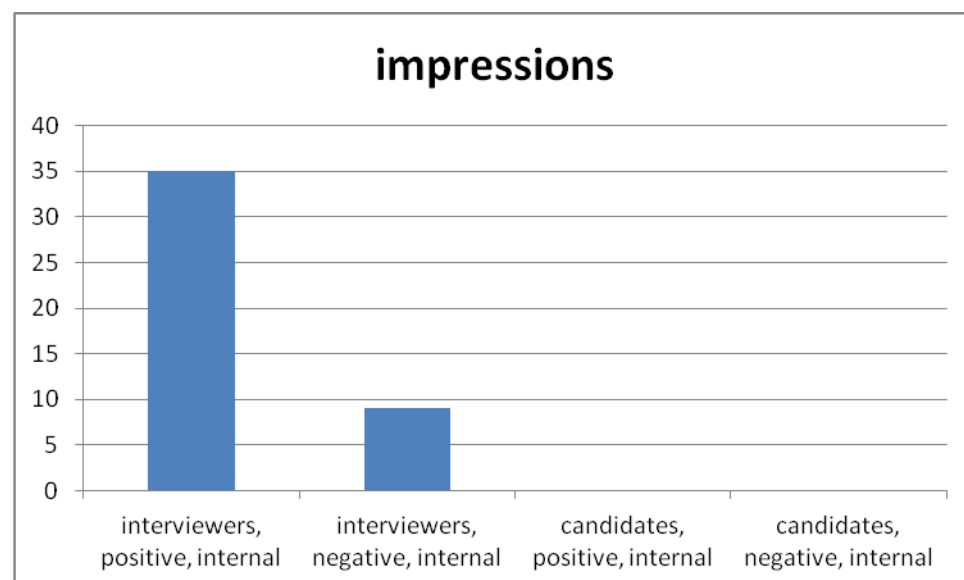
Impressions were another internal factor that had a moderately strong influence on perceptions in the interviews. The influence of this factor on the interviewers' perceptions was significantly more positive than negative. While candidates may have been aware of the importance of these impressions, in this instance they seemed not to be attaching any importance to the influence of impressions on the interviewers' perceptions. Impressions can be decisive in outcomes. For example, attractiveness is only a part of the impression factor. However, it does lead to candidates being viewed as more sociable, competent, confident, and likely to succeed than unattractive

candidates (Ilkka, 1995; Bright and Hutton, 2000; Straus, Miles and Levesque, 2001).

As well as influencing the interviewers' behaviour in interviews (Dipboye and Macan, 1988), impressions are also more influential than gender upon hiring decisions (Ilkka, 1995).

Thus impressions are important because they can influence interviewers' hiring decisions. For example, appearance – a static nonverbal form of communication in an interview, as opposed to a dynamic nonverbal factor such as eye contact – influences interviewers' evaluations (Dipboye and Macan, 1988; Ilkka, 1995).

> *Yeah, I think it did because, by the end of it, like I said, it was, he was one of the people who would make a decision on, like it, wasn't like he was one person who left my thoughts straight away, no. He, yeah, it was a good interview. (MA423-425)*

Presenting a good impression was particularly important for front-line roles.

> *I feel it is because in this industry, first impression is very important because we only get a, you know two, three minute window of opportunity when somebody assesses us. So that is the main important, yeah. (MI 194-196)*

The most important impressions that influence interviewers in interviews are the candidate's 'wow' factor, and their perceived genuineness.

> *I suppose, you're going to remember it if this has a wow factor in it. Did this have the wow factor for me? Nope. (MF 668-669)*

> *And that is probably one of the things that did come across in the interview, the whole time he was genuine. He was not playing a part. Like he wasn't playing*

I'm here for an interview, he was C10, until now, certainly a genuine, a genuine interview, like no other, like he was himself when he came, so. (MK 568-571)

There was a range of personal impressions of candidates being perceived by the interviewers in the interviews. These were intelligence, pleasantness, interview readiness, experience of the world, and professionalism.

C02's interview, he's very smart. He really is (MB 527)

I think he was lovely. He was a very sweet boy. (MB 80)

He looked like he was ready for the interview. He was pretty focused. I think he's done a fair bit of homework. So I think I got that impression pretty quickly, he was ready for the interview. (MJ 40-42)

I don't know why, this could probably relate a little bit. I think this comes down to experiences. I felt that the candidate probably experienced a little but probably not a lot, like the outside world, if that makes sense. That's probably the best way to describe it. From an interviewing point, I think she seems a little bit at the time. As in well rounded, probably still explore a little bit more. (MF 711-715)

Professionalism. Professionalism for me as well is also (MI 201)

Interviewers were also sensitive to a candidate's cultural fit with the team and their passion for the role.

Maybe, my attitude or my confidence, didn't show that, didn't show that I was very eager for that role.
R
You did not show a lot of interest.
C11

Because at the beginning I realise that I not quite suitable for that role .

R

So already not motivated to ...

C11

I think they can feel that or read that from my eyes (C11 904-913)

I'm not sure. I think, as in just as a person, culturally I think that he would fit into our group here. Like I don't think that'll be a problem at all. (MA 812-813)

In summary, impressions were a moderate factor influencing hiring decisions. Impressions are perceptions of candidates' intangible personal characteristics, such as professionalism and suitability for the role. They are influenced by the candidates' verbal ability, nonverbal behaviour, questions, and interview preparation – considerations that are discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

4.1.10. Nonverbal

Definition: a candidate's dress and physical behaviour in an interview.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
nonverbal	25	15	3	2
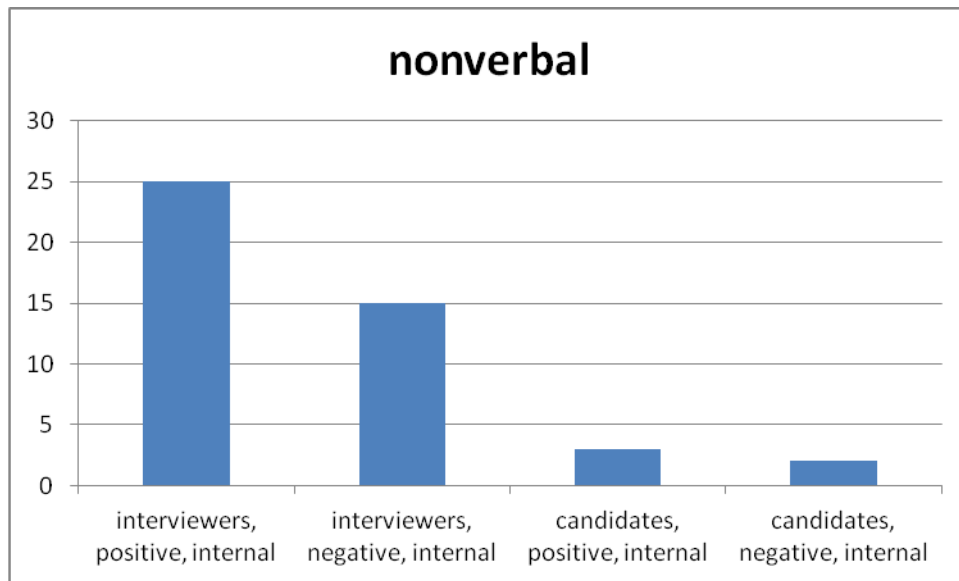
The nonverbal factor is an important aspect of intercultural communication (Molinsky, Krabbenhoft, Ambady and Choi, 2005) and it can create varying impressions of people upon those observing them from the viewpoint of another culture (Vrij and Winkel, 1994). This factor includes the way physical appearance affects interviewer rating (Parsons and Liden, 1984; Burnett and Motowidlo, 1998; Barrick, Shaffer and DeGrassi, 2009). An internal factor, the nonverbal factor is a moderately strong influence on interviewers and candidates in an interview. This factor has greater influence on both the positive and negative perceptions of interviewers than on those of candidates, and its influence on interviewers' perceptions is much more positive than negative. In other words, interviewers place much more emphasis on the verbal factor – and particularly its positive effects – than candidates themselves do. The nonverbal factor influences interviewers' perceptions of a candidate's personal characteristics (Straus, Miles and Levesque, 2001; Stewart, Dustin, Barrick and Darnold, 2008) and competence (Howard and Ferris, 1996). For example, a good handshake conveys sociability, friendliness and dominance; a poor handshake conveys introversion, shyness and neuroticism (Stewart, Dustin, Barrick

and Darnold, 2008). Howard and Ferris (1996) have noted that in the United States, candidates who smile, nod their heads and make more direct eye contact are more favourably perceived, and that other nonverbal behaviour, such as avoidance someone's gaze, is also influential, but in a negative way. They suggest that this may not generalise to other cultures.

In this study the nonverbal factor was a moderately strong influence that resulted in interviewers having confidence in their hiring decisions.

> *I felt that I got what I wanted out of the interview to know that he was the right person for the branch, even though his words weren't might not have been enough, I can tell in his demeanour and his behaviour and the way that he said things, that he was the right person. (MK 268-271)*

The nonverbal factor influenced many other factors in the interviews, the most important of which was the impression of genuineness. Open body language and voice in conjunction with verbal and behavioural factors promoted a sense of confidence.

> *Friendly, very open body language. (MH 120)*

> *... he's got a genuineness in his voice, (ML 317)*

The nonverbal factor was important in the interviews because it is not just what is said but demeanour that has an effect. Nonverbal considerations 'talked' and influenced the interviewers' perceptions of the candidates and impacted on hiring decisions. The interviewers were prepared to overlook certain shortcomings in candidates if appropriate nonverbal factors were strong.

297

... we know that he didn't interview very well, so we could acknowledge that, there was that either language barrier or differences, but I knew, what I saw in C10 was what I wanted. I knew that but it's hard for me to put into words. I felt that I got what I wanted out of the interview to know that he was the right person for the branch, even though his words weren't might not have been enough, I can tell in his demeanour and his behaviour and the way that he said things, that he was the right person. (MK 266-271)

The interviewers' perceptions were influenced by several types of nonverbal behavior in the candidates. Body language that was observed took the form of eye contact, sitting posture and handshakes, all of which helped build rapport with the interviewers. They conveyed to the interviewers a sense of confidence and interest in being at the interview and in the role.

I guess her composure, her posture. She was very, I can remember her sitting there and sitting with quite a good posture (MH 386-387)

Interviewers perceived the candidates as being open and honest when the body language was open.

I don't think she was too guarded at all. I think that's a comfortable thing, it's when people do this ((crossed arm across chest)) they're closed up. She was quite relaxed. (MF 716-717)

Interviewers' perceptions were also influenced by candidates being on time for the interview, and by their body language and the way they dressed. These attributes created a good first impression, which was important for the role.

He was professionally dressed, which is always something that I look for. He was on time. He was slightly early which is always good. He introduced himself well. He shook hands. I asked him to come into the office. I suppose that was my first impression. (ME 151-154)

Speech characteristics that influenced interviewers' perceptions were clarity, speed and pace. As well as being communicative, a cheerful voice engages the interviewer and can convey a sense of being genuinely interested.

He was just very bubbly, he was chatty, he really, like he was, he spoke very fast which showed that he was eager to kinda hold me you know me with conversation, so he really wanted me to, sort of, he had good eye contact. (MK 77-79)

... he's got a genuineness in his voice, (ML 320)

Smiles were influential through their impact on perceptions of extroversion.

I didn't think C03 would probably be as friendly as I first thought. I know she had that big smile and I thought she was friendly but in the interview I really found her nice and friendly and I think I must have a preconception because I do remember thinking, 'Oh gosh you are really friendly', and so I am a little bit overwhelmed by that. (MC 772-776)

Negative nonverbal characteristics that were perceived were a lack of gesturing and a monotonous voice.

He answered the questions but he didn't, he wasn't using hand gestures and things like that. He was very very straight with his answers. I don't think that he was monotonous but he didn't have a huge range in his voice when he was speaking. (MD 113-115)

299

Over-acting resulted in negative perceptions.

> *I recall when I asked her this question and she was re-enacting there, no no no, I didn't do that, that's not my fault, I don't know, it may just have been that professionalism that dropped a little bit for me. (MI 583-587)*

Speaking softly produced negative perceptions of candidates' customer service and sales ability.

> *The main reason why I didn't like C11, for a customer service role, he spoke very very softly, and it was very like, for his communication skills not only with his language but because he spoke so softly its very hard for communication to happen between the customer and the candidate. (ML 626-629)*

In summary, the above analysis shows that nonverbal factors are important in conveying a sense of professionalism necessary for a role. Considering the powerful influence that these factors can have on interviewers, candidates should be more aware of their various features and their significance in interviews. Sitting posture and voice, in particular, are important in creating a perception of openness and honesty, which in turn are important steps towards the interviewer believing and trusting the candidate. One possible reason the nonverbal factor is more positively perceived is that it is less difficult for candidates to be aware of explicit behaviour in an interview setting, and to adapt accordingly. On the other hand, identifying the interviewers' invisible personal and value expectations, and adapting one's behaviour to these expectations, is much more difficult. That candidates' nonverbal behaviour tends to be more positively perceived is likely due to the successful adaptation of their behaviour by the candidates. The nonverbal factor has a decisive impact on interviewers and also

300

a strong mediating influence on the personal characteristics and abilities displayed by candidates.

4.1.11. Two-way interaction

Definition: interviewers and candidates are able to have a conversation, ask questions of each other, and make decisions about the role.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
two-way interaction	23	12	5	2
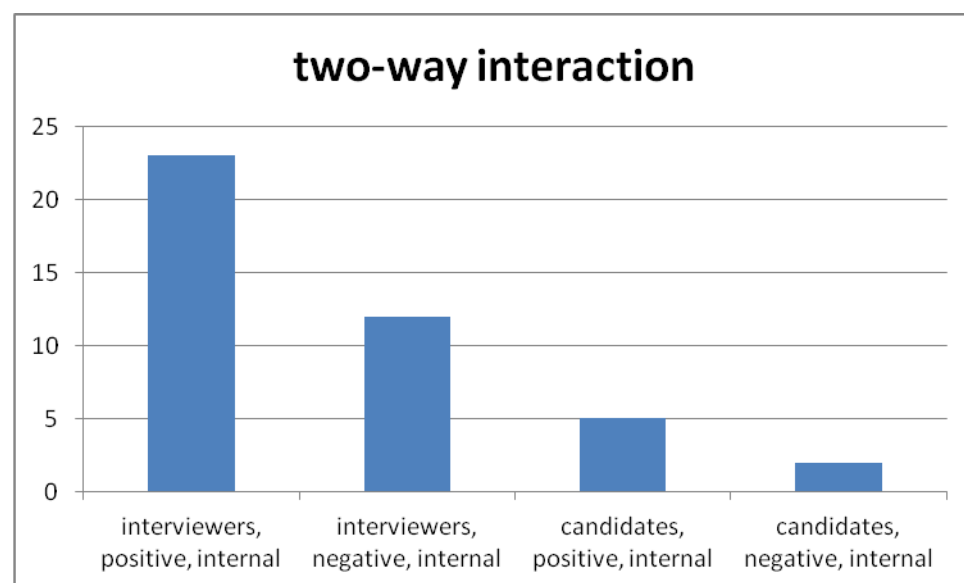
Another internal factor, two-way interaction, was a moderately strong factor influencing the interviewers and candidates in the interviews. Interaction skills are important in intercultural communication (Rings, 2006). They influence candidates' behaviour in interviews (Liden, Martin and Parsons, 1993) and interviewers use them as indicators of a candidate's personality (Anderson, Silvester, Cunningham-Snell and

Haddleton, 1999). This factor has a great influence on both the positive and negative perceptions of interviewers, but the positive perceptions are stronger than the negative ones. In other words, interviewers place more emphasis on candidates' two-way interaction than the candidates themselves do. Two-way interaction can be a decisive influence on outcomes.

In this study, two-way interaction in the interviews was important because it had a very positive influence on the interviewers and could be a decisive factor in interview outcomes.

> *I would like it if they do ask questions as well. That's important to me because it's not just one way. It's give and take. (MG 211-212)*

Having a conversational interview also had implications for the candidates.

> *More conversational, conversational tone. I think if you make the interview more conversational, it makes it easier for yourself too. (C01 404-405)*

Two-way interaction showed itself, in particular, in the form of candidates asking questions of the interviewer, i.e., the candidate became the interviewer.

> *More interactiveness, I suppose in an interview. The interview as I say, I personally see the interview as an opportunity for a two way street as well. Sure there's always going to be questions but then the opportunity to ask some questions as well. (ME 308-310)*

The extract below illustrates the effectiveness of a candidate's question for engaging with the interviewer.

We, we advise them what best suits their business um we do complete the application while the customer's over the phone ... ((C01 interrupts)).

C01

... so ...   ((MB interrupts)).

MB

... and we either fax or post them out ... ((C01 interrupts)).

C01

... so the role in Parramatta, I actually get to, have face-to-face meetings?

MB

It's not face-to-face. It is completely over the phone.

C01

Oh, yeah?

MB

However ur you are servicing the customer. So your call is not going to be two minutes if you have to complete an application. It can be up to 10 to 15 minutes [C01: yep] and that's quoting, completing an application and sending it out [C01: OK.] So that's, that's what we do over there (S01 140-157)

Candidates who asked questions demonstrated the two-way decision making process that can occur in a selection interview.

Just because I went to the interview doesn't mean that I have to accept it. While I'm there, I'm actually analysing whether it's a good idea for me to continue in that role. (C01 188-189)

Not asking question had a strong negative influence.

... yeah another another negative is he didn't ask that much question you know, you know he should have asked a little bit more question, you know, in the end he didn't really ask much questions you know (MM 213-215)

Interviewers attributed a candidate's asking questions to the candidate's ability to listen and to their interest in the job.

Oh, they're great. I love it. I love it. I love it when people ask questions because they are interested. They're keen, they want to know more. It just shows that they are listening. They know what they are applying for cause I always feel someone doesn't ask a question, they're just applying for a job they that they know nothing about which is sometimes not their fault but you should investigate when you're applying for a job you should investigate and ask as many questions as you possibly can because then we go hey he's actually interested, he's asking relevant questions. (MB 458-464)

There were other factors apart from candidates' questions that were an important influence on interviewers' positive perceptions. Candidates needed to maintain a good momentum in the interviews in order to build rapport; they needed to answer questions, to show appropriate nonverbal behavior such as eye contact and a good handshake, and to be able to enjoy the interview experience.

Probably that we could communicate together. Yeah, it wasn't, like it wasn't, we didn't have to wait a long time for an answer. We just ended up building a good rapport with each other and just flew on from there. (MA 580-582)

... and there was a good relationship as well. We had a bit of laugh and so, it was nice to have that interaction with a, when you're interviewing somebody. (MI 118-120)

The following extract highlights some of the above positive characteristics of a candidate interacting effectively with an interviewer.

So we're not, we can't classify ourselves as a call centre because it's not like, you hang up the phone, beep, so does get like that, however, we are giving that extra ... ((C01 interrupts))
C01
... you're managing, yeah ... ((MB interrupts)).
MB

... service ... ((C01 continues talking)).

C01

... you're managing aspects of a customer service.

MB

Exactly, so we're the ones who're advising the customer what best suits, what facilities best suit their business. We're the ones that are actually completing the form and gathering information. Others, well you're not transferring them to another department ... ((C01 interrupts)).

C01

... that sounds good, that sounds appealing for me. If a customer calls and they asks me a particular query [MB: yeah] I would like to offer them the products and business accounts and all that, I can put them in the right direction. Well that's ur that sounds, yeah.

MB

That's what we do.

MA

What else that would be a benefit for you, this is what you'll like as well. (S01 162-183)

In summary, two-way interaction was a key feature of a successful interview. The ability of the candidates to ask questions as well as answer questions contributed to the perception of rapport and connection with the interviewers, which was critical to the interviewing relationship. Perceptions of the two-way interaction factor were influenced by the candidates' verbal and English language ability, their extroversion, and the interviewers' feedback and friendliness in the interviews. These factors are discussed elsewhere in the chapter.

4.1.12. Meaning of work

Definition: a candidates' motivation in making a job application.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
meaning of work	21	8	8	4
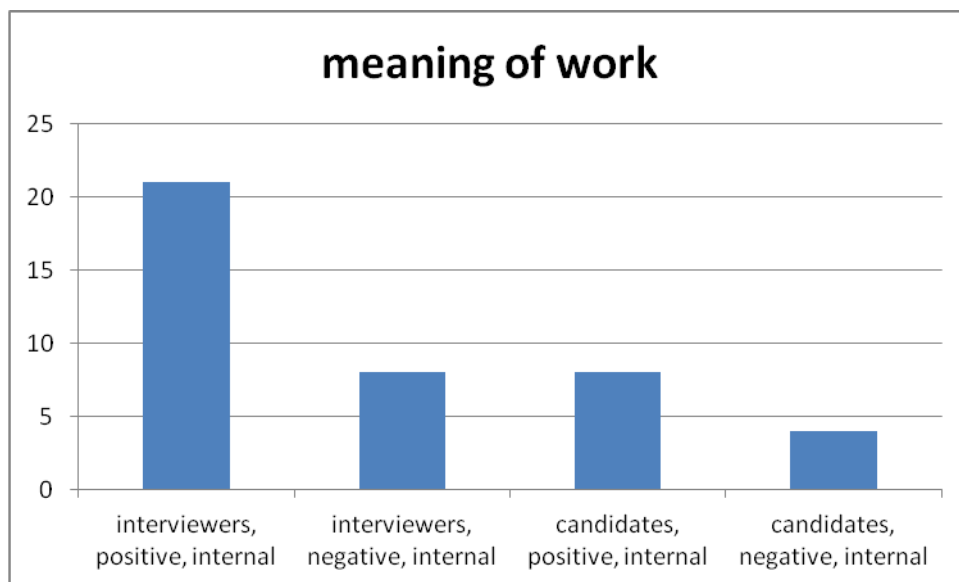
An internal factor, meaning of work, also influenced the perceptions of the interviewers and candidates in the interviews. This moderately strong factor had a greater influence on the interviewers than on the candidates, and it influenced the interviewers more positively than negatively. In other words, the interviewers placed more emphasis on the candidates' meaning of work factor than the candidates themselves did, and the candidates underestimated this influence on the interviewers' positive perceptions. The meaning of work factor, particularly passion, was a decisive factor in hiring decisions.

Economic necessity fundamentally drove the candidates' need for work.

I was concerned if they would move the jobs overseas. Because a lot of inbound sales calls, tend to be, you know, kind of jobs that goes overseas. I was a bit concerned about that as well. (C04 166-168)

Work was to be taken seriously.

Very serious about his job, not here to play games. He's here for a career. (MK 103)

In the extracts below, the candidates were also motivated by work flexibility, location, and the hours of work required by the role.

It was the idea of, there were a few things that went through my mind, is that I was trying to analyse all the different factors that got me the reasons to apply. So the factors would be, they advertised as part time, fact that it was flexible, the fact that it was in the city, (C01 122-125)

Candidates were also motivated to work for organisations that are prestigious.

AFSO is a really good bank, and then I want to start my career in that place, it's a good starting level position, so I applied for the job. (C05 100-101)

Other candidates might have been motivated for social reasons.

The fact that she did want the job. Because she wanted to go back to full time, it was a full time or part time work? She wanted to sort of get away from the house. (MG 548-549)

By far the greatest influence on interviewers' perceptions was the candidates' passion for the role. Much of this was discussed above, under career alignment. Passion for the role can alone be a decisive factor in interview outcomes.

> *... it came down to a few people and C02 was one of those people who was very passionate. (MA 867-868)*

Some candidates were passionate about the organisation and/or industry.

> *... so to work in big organisation is always my dream, so saying, always my dream, is quite a big statement. It's hard to think that someone's dream would be to work in a bank, I don't know, I certainly didn't dream of working in a bank. But I believed that with him (MK 873-875)*

Pride in working for a prestigious organisation was a factor seen in the following extract.

> *um I guess just carry the pride of um being an employee of AFSO ur just recognise that the way I carry myself is how other people see AFSO. If I miscarry myself then AFSO's reputation will be affected, and having that pride will will drive me to to achieve. (S09 317-319)*

Culture can influence a candidate's sense of the meaning of work. For example, the dream of working for a large organisation was attributed to culture in the following:

> *I do, I believe that there's a part of him that you know I just think there's a part of him that's perceived in the Chinese culture that the bigger the company the better it is. Do you know what I mean? There is a part of that. And there's a part of me that C10 would have gone home that night and you know what he is really proud to work for the bank. (MK 876-879)*

Passionate candidates were seen to have initiative and to be willing to go beyond the call of duty.

It's just, you see what kind of person she is, so I mean that stood out to me, that she's just genuine and will go over and above for anyone, whether it be customer or a team member. (MG 552-554)

Overly strong passion for work could result in negative perceptions.

Is that, if he doesn't perform, how personally he will take it? So, do you know what, I think that, that C10 and certainly the Chinese culture, if I can generalise like this, is certainly a culture that, has a background for performing. So they take a lot of pride in being very successful in what they do. And C10 I would hate to think of what would happen to C10 if C10 didn't perform? (MK653-657)

What was also noted, and perhaps connected with initiative, was a candidate's interest in developing themselves in their work.

Maybe also her development. Like she was very eager to learn as well (MG 682)

Experience was highly valued.

The value important to me, I think the experience, your working experience, real life experience is more important. (C06 616-617)

Interviewers were also influenced by candidates' having an altruistic motivation for work. Wanting to help people and make a difference was positively perceived.

... but when she spoke about her previous experience she was, expressed the people side of her role, and that was what she was mostly interested in, helping people or making a difference with people (MH 153-156)

In summary, a sense of the meaning of work was driven by intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Material reward, status, making a difference, growth, social contacts and passion for the role were motivating factors that motivated the candidates to apply for the roles. Passion for the role was a very important influence in the interviews. Intrinsic factors were positively perceived by the interviewers. Interviewers were, at best, neutral about extrinsic factors, and, at worst, perceived them negatively. Yet intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors are cultural, as can be seen in the passion that the Chinese have for big organisations.

4.1.13. Interviewers' question quality

Definition: the clarity and relevance of interviewers' questions to the candidates.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
interviewers' question quality	1	3	17	16
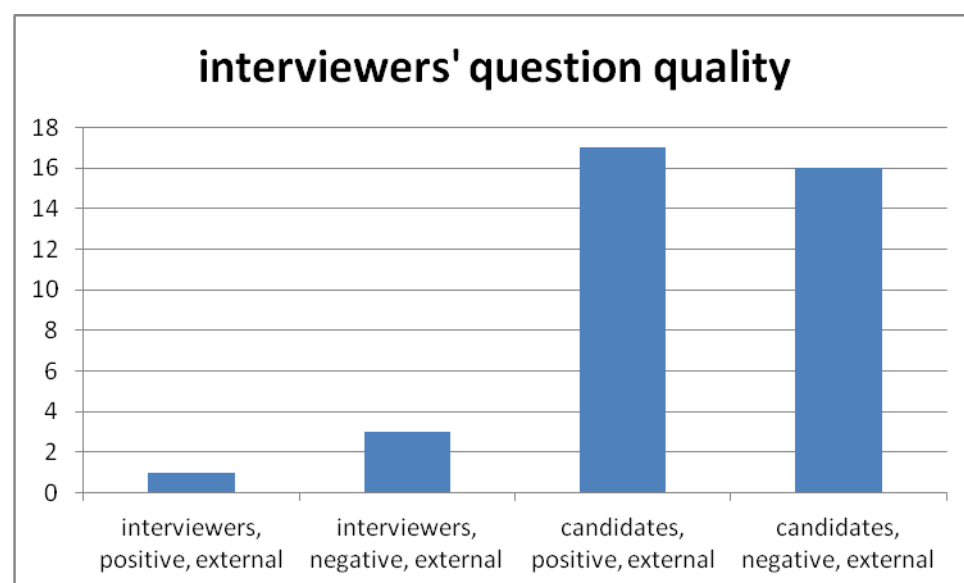
The quality of interviewers' questions was the only external factor that had a moderately strong influence on the perceptions of the interviewers and candidates in the interviews. This factor had a greater influence, both positive and negative, on the perceptions of the candidates than on those of the interviewers. In other words, the candidates were much more influenced by interviewers' question quality than the interviewers realised. Interviewers' question quality influenced outcomes.

The quality of interviewers' questions is a matter of their relevance to the role and the candidates' work experience, and how well they highlight these features of a candidate.

> *Those questions relate to my work experience, to my study experience, what kind of person I am and how do I normally handle different different situations in my future job like how to handle the pressure, what kind of person I am relating to the future job. Whether what kind of aspects of my previous job that I most enjoy and least enjoy. That shows my personal qualities and characters, so I have to look into myself and find answer for them with detail examples. That's quite challenging. Those are really good questions. (C05 303-308)*

The way interviewers articulated their questions affected the quality of the candidates' responses, and they recognised the importance of being clear about their questions.

> *I thought that how I articulated my questions fairly well, he similarly, got great responses across quite well. So I seem to be quite happy. (ME 72-74)*

Poor question quality sometimes resulted from interviewers being unclear about their intentions. In the first extract below, the interviewer asked the candidate a question that caused the candidate some discomfort because the candidate was not sure about the intent of the interviewer's question. This discomfort was explained by the candidate in the second extract.

... so if, if there's another position to come up as well with more hours, would you be interested in that also, or what ... ((C08 interrupts)).
C08
... ur ... ((MI continues)).
MI
... or is it just the two days you'd be ... ((C08 interrupts)).
C08
... you mean in our branch?
MI
Oh, in, sort of, in around this area.
C08
yeah ur I don't mind.
MI
OK. [C08: yeah yeah] no problem. (S08 167-180)

... from my perspective I think it is quite hard to answer because if you say no I want to take other job with more time. Obviously you not sincere. Because here most of the people care about money. Like how much they give. Everybody have to make a living so it is not sincere. But if you say yes, I don't mind, I would like to choose other, she might think oh you're no loyalty. So it's like a dilemma. You don't know how to answer.
R
That's right. You're not sure what is it that they are trying to get at. Maybe there is another question underneath it.
C08
I think a better way she ask maybe OK. if you are working at our branch already and they got more job would you go there?(C08 649-659)

Poor expression can also confuse the candidate, as seen in the example below.

... if you're in that sort of state where you weren't getting along with someone [C03: yep] after you've already clearly defined team goals and, etc, etc, etc [C03: mm mm] like what sort of skills or what sort of things would you do to try to start either communicating or just making, making it less mitigating - or

312

mitigating the fact that you're not less mitigating cause that's the reverse um just try to be really specific with the example if, if, if you have any. (S03 308-313)

Formality can be intimidating.

I felt she was very intimidating. I think she's too formal in a way, she makes the candidate think a lot. So put a lot of pressure on the candidate. (C04 426-427)

There are techniques that interviewers can use to improve on their question quality. They can phrase their questions negatively as well as positively.

Because in the question, why do you want to leave the role, so I think that question, um about, it's about two things, one is about why I left my current job, the other thing, she didn't she didn't mention is about why I want to join in AFSO, so I think I didn't explain quite well. (C11 462-465)

Interviewers can elaborate and explain their questions by providing context. The extract below is an example of a good quality interview question that is fully elaborated and explained.

in terms of working under pressure, this is a very busy branch [C05: mm] OK.? ur always ur very long queues, lots of customers to serve [C05: mm] on top of that we also have um the expectation particularly with the way we serve our customers, we have very specific ways that we serve our customers to deliver exceptional service [C05: yeah yeah] and on top of that we have to make sure that the teller can balance and give out the right money [C05: yeah yeah] plus also do the sales side of the job which is very important as well [C05: yeah yeah] help our customers and find products that can really assist them [C05: yeah yeah yeah] OK.? um can you give me, so that that that basically involve doing a lot of things at once, OK.? [C05: yeah, yeah, yeah] which can create pressure [C05: yeah] for the staff member [C05: yeah]. Can you give me an example of when you've being placed under pressure at work? [C05: Oh OK.] what was the

situation? um and how did you handle it? And what was the outcome? (S05 122-133)

In summary, the above analysis shows that candidates were influenced by a number of the charcateristics of interviewers' questions – ones which had consequences for the candidates' confidence and responses, and which ultimately impacted upon perceptions of their performance in the interview. Precise questions that have a clear purpose can be supplemented with context to enhance understanding of the question. Candidates can be taken by surprise if questions seem to them irrelevant to the job role and their work experience. Chan and Wu (2009) found that a subordinate's satisfaction with a superior's communication ability influences the subordinate-superior relationship. It can therefore be inferred that an interviewer's question quality may also influence the candidate's satisfaction with their communication ability, and hence impact upon their subsequent relationship. Factors that influence perceptions of an interviewer's question quality are the candidates' previous work experience and the interviewer's behavioural questions.

4.1.14. Work ethics

Definition: a candidate's wanting to be at work and possessing mature work habits.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
work ethics	17	9	2	0
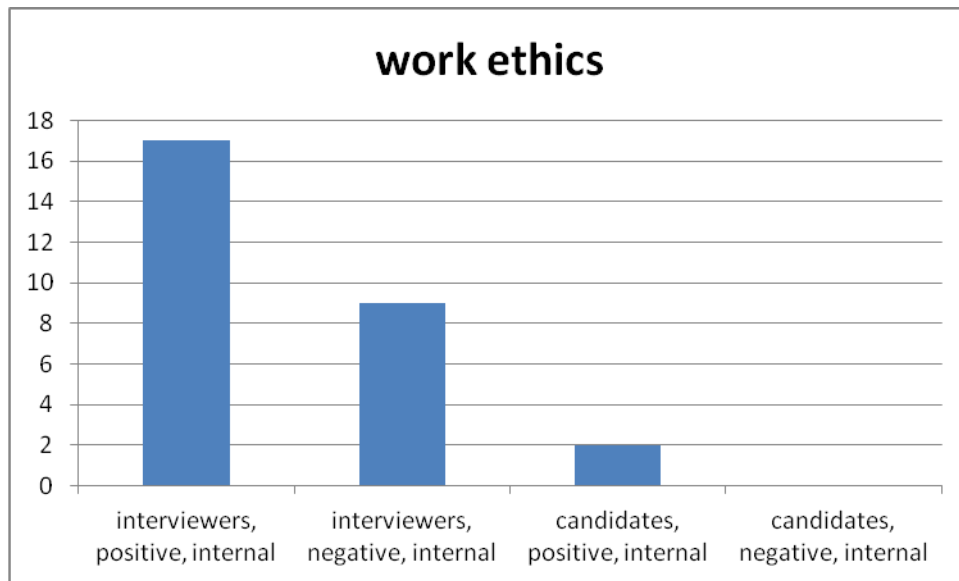
work ethics

An internal factor, work ethics has little influence on either interviewers or candidates. It has greater influence on both the positive and negative perceptions of interviewers than on the perceptions of candidates. In other words, interviewers attach more significance to candidates' work ethics than the candidates themselves do. Although a weak factor, work ethics can be decisive for interview outcomes.

In this study, work ethics was seen to influence interviewers' hiring decisions.

It is always good for people to have a good work ethic as well. (MD 350)

Good work ethics were identified with being hardworking, striving for excellence, being persistent, having flexibility, and taking responsibility for one's training and development.

Yeah yeah yeah ((reading)) yeah he keeps handling the objections, he doesn't just give up, he just keeps telling them about, because it's actually better for the customer. (ML 309-310)

I really needed someone who was part-time, but I can get to work full-time when it happens, and it's going to happen, what I can't have is, is all my part-timers saying they can't do any extra hours, because when they go on holidays, I can't run a branch. So in this case, C10 will be the first person I'll offer a full-time work to as soon as it comes up. Because he's had, he's been able to say to me, yeah I'll stay back, and already he's doing that. (MK 464-468)

I want someone who is going to say to me, I'm going to take a brochure home at night and read it, and I'll come tomorrow and I'll know about it. I need someone to be proactive, seriously I don't have time to be able to sit with someone and, people we are working with are adults, they're not, they're not kids, they're not high school kids, they're young mature adults who should be able to learn on their own. (MK 795-799)

Culture influenced perceptions of self-development.

... so what I was trying to find out was, what he could do on his own, and talked about studying harder, the training program, and I think that's typical of Chinese culture, that went without saying. (MK 785-787)

Candidates were aware that the interviewers could be under the influence of the 'hardworking Chinese' stereotype, and might therefore evaluate Chinese candidates more positively.

I think that's a positive thing. I think that could be a positive thing, because people perceive that Chinese people are hardworking people, so that's a benefit for us, that could be one benefit for us. I think that is a very good benefit for the fact that if it's is a cross-cultural interview (C01 866-869)

On the other hand, one interviewer, under the influence of the 'high performing Chinese' stereotype, was concerned that Chinese candidates might not be able to

handle setbacks in the workplace.

Absolutely, yeah, yeah, whereas my other staff wouldn't give it a second thought. C10 takes, I can tell, things, even now, after a couple of weeks in the job, if he's out, he doesn't balance for the day, if it's five dollars, he'll get deeply upset about it. And that's not what we see in a normal candidate. (MK 661-664)

In summary, although the question of mature work habits was not a major influence on perceptions, interviewers valued the importance of work ethics. Work ethics were taken to be strongly influenced by culture. They could in some cases have a decisive influence on interview outcomes.

4.1.15. Pre-interview conditions

Definition: events leading to the interviews.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
pre-interview conditions	1	1	4	22

pre-interview conditions

pre-interview conditions	value
interviewers, positive, external	1
interviewers, negative, external	1
candidates, positive, external	4
candidates, negative, external	22
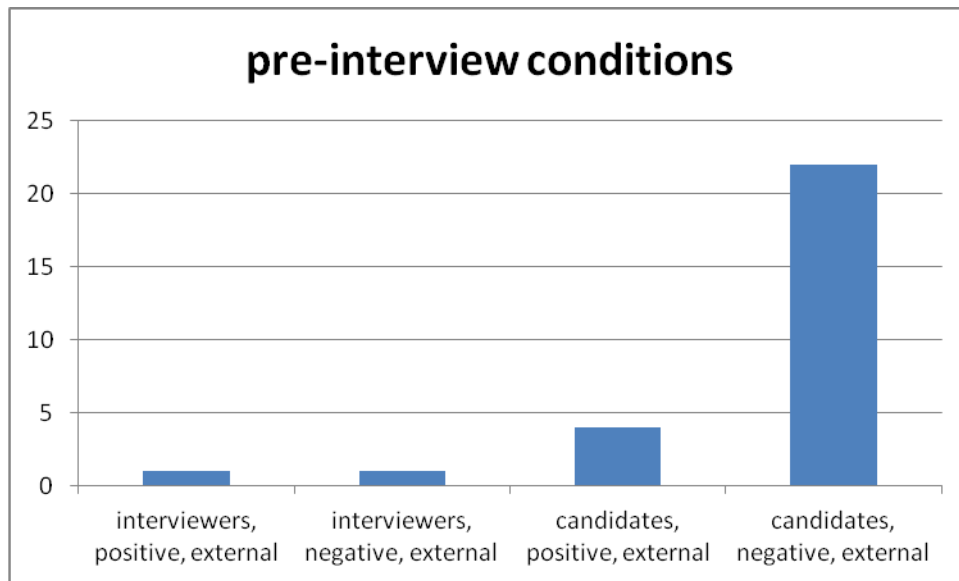
An external factor, pre-interview conditions are the circumstances leading to a face-to-face interview. These include the way the interview was organised and set up, the pre-interview instructions that were given to the candidates prior to the interview, the reception of the candidates on arrival at the place of the interview, and the assessment centre experiences, where appropriate. Pre-interview conditions are a small factor with little influence on perceptions in the interview. However, in this study this factor had a greater influence on both the positive and negative perceptions of the candidates than on those of the interviewers, who seemed little affected by it. In other words, the interviewers were either unaware of pre-interview conditions or underestimated their importance to the candidates. Pre-interview conditions do influence outcomes.

Interviewers were not aware of the influence of the assessment centre, the impact of short notice of an interview, and the importance of pre-interview instructions for candidates.

I guess my focus was all on the team bonding session, that went for an hour. So my energy was wasted on that.

R

I see, so by the time you got to the interview, you had it basically.

C04

Yeah, I pretty much was, I wanted to get out of here. (C04 477-482)

I guess, between applying for the job and being you know called for the interview was really a short, it was only a short space of time. I don't think I had a lot of, you know, time to think about questions about the job (C07 162-164)

Because I, I, I got an email from ML, and in the email I thought I need to meet with ME and another person called, I don't know the name.

R

O, someone else.

C11

Yes, someone else, someone else, I saw those two people, they were managers of that branch. So, but I think the guy in the interview is from another branch.

R

It was somebody else.

C11

So a bit confused, but doesn't matter to me. (C11 365-375)

A candidate's confusion could also arise from their interviewing for the wrong job.

... generally there were two roles when I went for the interview, there was the part time role, there was the full-time role. The interview I had with MB and MA, they were interviewing me about the role in Parramatta. On the website it was advertised for Parramatta and Sydney. When they were interviewing, they were interviewing specifically for the Parramatta role. I had another interview for the city role. (C01 106-110)

Role confusion sometimes led to the candidate's inability to answer the interviewers'

question.

... what is it about the bank that attracts you, like what particular aspects of the role, that same thing, she ask also, because at the beginning as I said, I was I was bit surprise as the role, so I really didn't know how to answer that question, yeah. (C11 481-483)

Pre-interview conditions could have a positive influence. In the extract below, the interviewer, MK, was positively influenced by a meeting with the candidate that took place before the formal live selection interview that was conducted a few days after the first encounter.

I think he was probably, before I met him, I had no, he actually came and presented himself to me, so I had no, he actually came up and said, I'm C10, I want a job here.
R
Oh, he actually came knocking.
MK
Yep, he came with his resume, he came just one day, and said, introduced himself, so I think, obviously no opportunity to even.
R
So you met him even before that formal interview.
MK
Absolutely.
R
And what was your first impression of him?
MK
He was quite casually dressed; and I am quite big on presentation. But he was very eager, enthusiastic, and certainly knew the background to the bank, I can tell he had done some research about it, the kind of job he was looking for, we sat down, we had just a casual chat. (MK 48-66)

The interviewers perceived that the circumstances immediately prior to the start of a formal selection interview could influence the candidates.

From my perspective, it can sometimes be uncomfortable for the participant to sit outside and fill out the paperwork, that sort of thing, previously. The reason for that is, that if something can't be filled, then we can proceed with the interview. So I can see how sometimes that it may be a little uncomfortable with that. You know you sitting out there filling out this paper work and then that sort of thing um but, so there was that, but then once we got inside and we started to build that rapport I felt both of us I feel felt comfortable. That was my perception, I don't know how she felt but I mean it's always harder when you're into this situation. The participant is under a bit more pressure. (MI 313-320)

The significance of this weak factor lay in the influence that it could have on a candidate's confidence and readiness for the interview.

Sometimes, that mood, I feel OK. Sometimes I will feel nervous. Sometimes I will feel a little bit depress, because I already got refused by another company. So I go to another interview, I little bit distress. (C08 426-428)

From the above analysis, pre-interview circumstances can be seen to be external causes that can contribute to a candidate's comfort, stress or confusion in an interview, and their lack of preparation. These pre-interview circumstances may take the form of circumstance leading to the selection interview day, such as the notice period, or the circumstances of the selection interview itself, e.g., the assessment centre experience. In any case, interviewers underestimated the influence that pre-interview circumstances could have on candidates.

4.1.16. Interview preparation

Definition: a candidate's reading of the job description, research on the organisation, and preparation of Q&A with behavioural examples.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
interview preparation	6	1	6	13
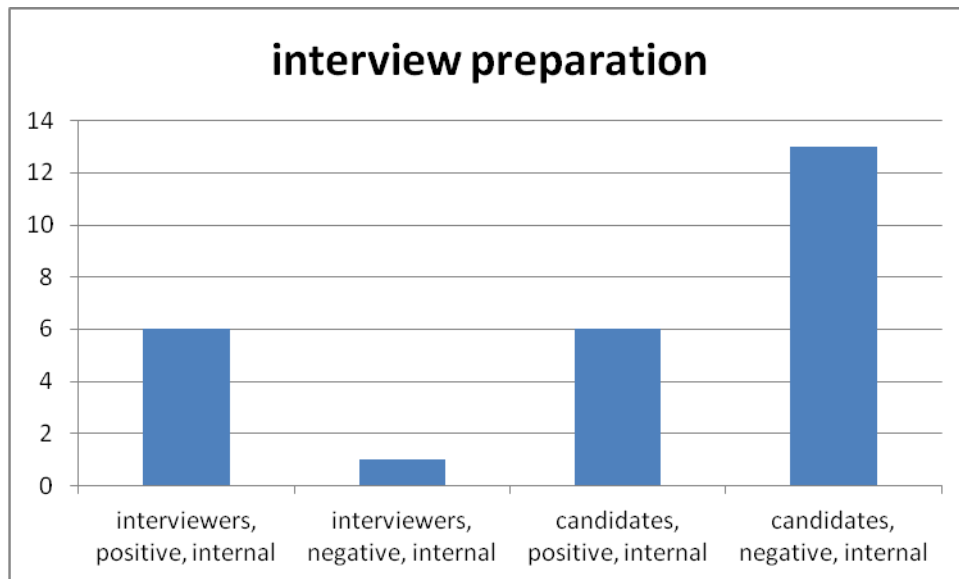
Interview preparation predicts job search success (Saks, 2006) by influencing interviewers' perceptions of a candidate's personality (Caldwell and Burger, 1998). This study shows that candidates' interview preparation is a weak factor with only a small influence on perceptions in an interview. The factor has a greater influence on candidates than on interviewers, and candidates are more negatively than positively influenced by it. In other words, the candidates attach more importance to interview preparation than the interviewers realise. Interview preparation does affect outcomes.

In this study, interview preparation influenced candidates' confidence, and here we must include their behavioural responses.

So fortunately I prepare some questions probably they like common it's like interview questions and I prepare the answer. If like the questions you prepare and what they ask you is different. Still the questions I prepare is a bit different because they ask me all the role play questions. (C06 166-169)

Both interviewers and candidates thought that interview preparation influences perceptions of candidates in an interview.

We, as part of our vision, we are focused on customer experience, and one of our expectations is trust and team spirit, which she mentioned. So she's obviously done some research about what AFSO is about, which is which is positive. (MI 515-517)

Maybe I can research for the job more so I can understand the role better so from the first question I can build up my confidence. The first impression lasts. (C03 541-542)

Interviewers assumed that candidates who had prepared for the interview were interested in the role and not lazy.

... also showed from the SSS that he did, he'd gone to do some research before coming to the branch so he's not lazy (MK 321-322)

Positive perceptions were elicited by a candidate's detailed knowledge of the role, product and organisation.

Then we talked about the SSS product. And his response was, and I remember quite clearly, like right on the mark, in that he had initially we talked about, you know, there was no question, I guess about the features and benefits, and he talked to me about, you know some of the things in the brochure, which meant that he read it, understood it (MK 761-764)

323

... certainly knew the background to the bank, I can tell he had done some research about it (MK 63-64)

An example of a detailed response highlighting interview preparation can be seen in the data extract below.

Can you tell me about a time when you had to cope with targets or deadlines, and if you can be specific with your examples please?
C08
yeah in the retail shop we got the um total sales target for the whole retail shop around $77,000 per month. And each staff has to achieve $100 per hour. So only meet these two requirements you can get the sales commission. (S08 79-85)

The extract below demonstrates the candidate's knowledge of the organisation and its products.

Yes ur SSS account is online high interest account [MK: yep] which is linked to AFSO transaction account [MK: yep] There is ur quite a few fantastic features. One is ur it provide high interest rate, high interest rate is five per cent, [MK: yes] I checked the website [MK: yeah] it's actually three point seven five percent ((MK)) per annum. It's a calculated daily and credited to our account monthly [MK: yep] and ur you can transfer the funds, between your, your transaction account, and NBS account [MK: yep] or transfer money to another Australian bank account, within minutes [MK: yep] and what you can do just do it in the computer in a minute, and a press button [MK: mm mm] quite easily, and there is no accounts fees for the NBS account. Fees may still apply for the AFSO transaction account [MK: yep] and if you have a regular savings plan [MK: yep] you can just set an amount a regular pay, and it will be easy transfer to a savings account easily, um you can never, you will feel never lock out, because you can easy change your plans [MK: yep] If you're quite interest on that, you can fill your applications, we can send the forms to you to sign, and open the account. (S10 178-191)

A lack of interview preparation not only harms a candidate's performance in an interview, but also impacts negatively on interviewers' perceptions of the candidate, as seen here:

> *One more thing I was going to say, sometimes Chinese candidates like I have interviewed like they just come to the interview, like not really prepared like, we ask about the product, and they all, one of them I had before, he say I didn't study about it from the email, I did not study, so not being prepared for the interview, that is another big one (MM 368-371)*

The following data extract shows the candidate being negatively perceived.

> *Yep? So what can you tell us about that product?*
> *C11*
> *um I wrote down something in a piece of paper, it's in the bag. (S11 146-148)*

Over-preparation can also create a negative perception. In the following comment MF attributed his negative perception of a candidate to the candidate's being too rehearsed in her response.

> *She might have been a little bit rehearsed about what actually happened (MF 600-601).*

In summary, interview preparation is a small but influential factor in interviews. It may influence interviewers, but to candidates it can be a decisive factor. The perception of interview preparation is influenced by the verbal factor, knowledge of organisation and role, language, previous interview experiences, role confusion and culture.

4.1.17. Physical environment

Definition:the lighting, space, noise and cleanliness of the interview setting.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
physical environment	1	0	8	18
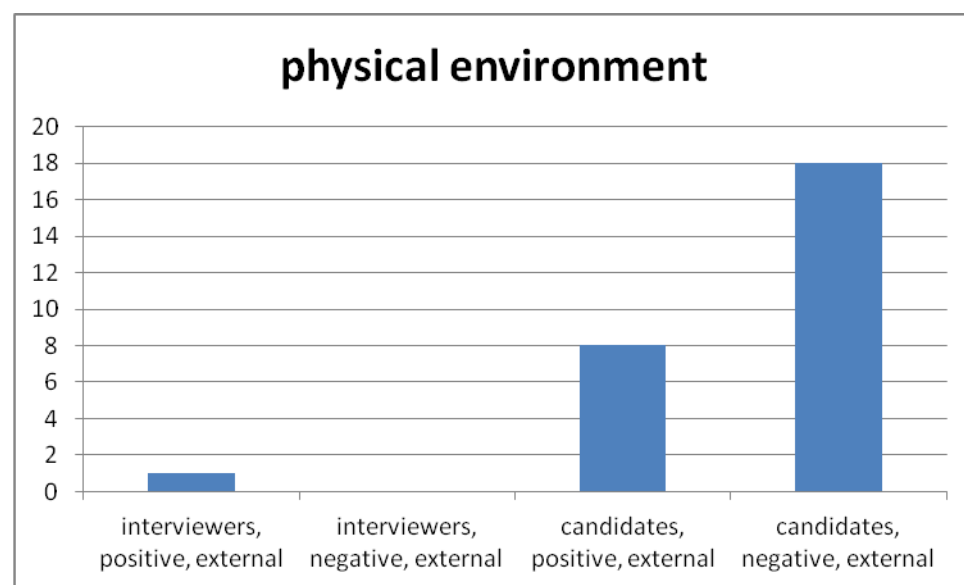
Another weak external factor, physical environment, has a small influence on the perceptions of candidates and interviewers. However, candidates are much more influenced by the physical environment than the interviewers are, and the influence is more negative than positive. The candidates are also more influenced by the physical environment than the interviewers realise. Physical environment does influence outcomes.

The relevant features of the physical environmental influencing the candidates in this study were sound, space, lighting, colour and seating arrangements.

It's not very nervous, it's very quiet, and the light is not very bright, it's a low light atmosphere. (C02 551-552)

In a confined space it does have a big impact on a person if you I find that very intimidating. (C04 754-755)

I thought it was good. It was OK., it was in a room, there's no distractions, and there's no table in front like this.
R
Oh, OK. How did they sit?
C07
Well, there was a table there and three chairs you know.
R
Oh, like together kind of thing.
C07
I think maybe that makes a lot of difference. (C07 917-926)

Yeah, about the interview room, I would prefer more wood and light colour, decoration, that will make me more like relax, rather than very bright colour.
R
Right, so it was quite strong was it?
C08
Yeah. Quite strong and make me uneasy. (C08 500-506)

The above shows that the physical environment did have important consequence for the candidates' confidence, which is a major factor in an interviewee's performance. Moreover, the physical environment influenced the candidates' ability to build rapport with the interviewers.

In summary, the above analysis shows that a variety of environmental characteristics influenced candidates' comfort and confidence in the interviews, as well as affecting

their ability to establish rapport with the interviewers. Interviewers were either unaware of or underestimated these influences. However, the influence of the physical environment on a candidate can be a subjective matter.

4.1.18. Candidates' questions

Definition: questions asked by candidates in an interview.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
candidates' questions	20	5	0	0
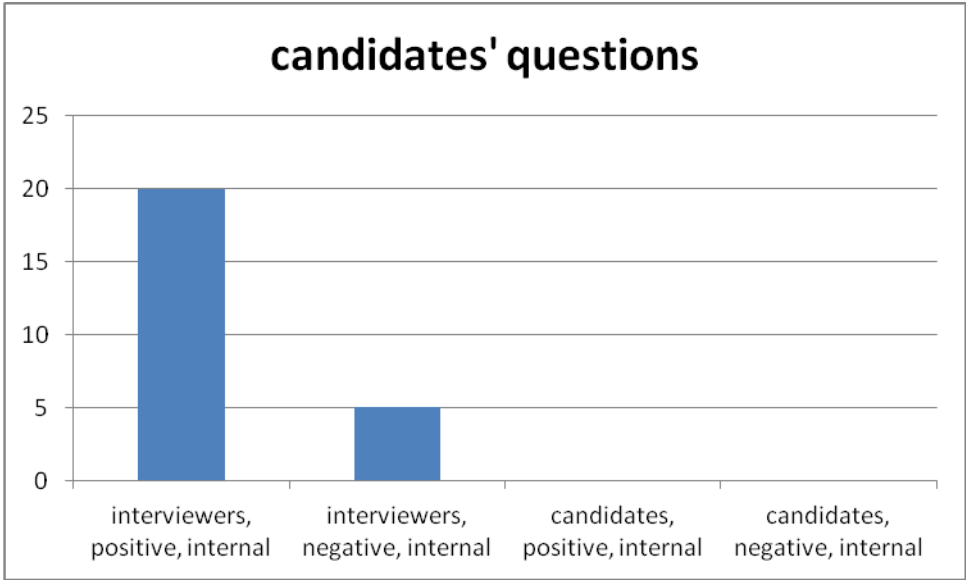
An internal factor, candidates' questions are a weak factor with little influence on perceptions in an interview. This factor influences interviewers' positive perceptions more than their negative perceptions. In this research sample, the candidates did not attach much importance to their questions in the interview. In other words, while the interviewers were impressed by some of the candidates' questions, the candidates

underestimated the value of asking questions in the interviews. Although not a prevalent influence, candidates' questions can in some cases be decisive for interview outcomes.

In this study the relevance of the candidates' questions could make a difference to the interviewer's perceptions.

> *I get asked from a range of people is, how many people do you interview? Very basic basic sort of questions, so it was I was happy with her when she asked me semi intelligent and communicating answers rather than, so I was happy with those questions. (MI 299-301)*

Asking the right questions could convey knowledge of the role and the desire to perform on the job, and could give insight into future employee-employer relationships.

> *Interesting because I haven't had that question thrown at me.*
> *R*
> *What did you make of that question and ...?*
> *MI*
> *I was quite impressed actually because I felt it was good to see somebody challenge me as well. It's, you know, a work place works well when you have an open sort of communication. (MH 277-284)*

The following extracts show some of the candidates' questions that impressed the interviewers in the interviews.

> *So then, you also have your targets that you will have to meet um so yeah just with the targets, it's probably about five, it's meet expectations, is five merchant*

facility applications returned per day [MB: um mm]. ur also we're now starting to ... ((C01 interrupts)).
C01
... ur five, five merchant facility applications per day.
MB
Come back.
C01
Come back. How many calls would you get in one day? (S01 276-284)

Oh yeah just like you asked my um ask me the question about the management style [MC: yep] I'd just like to know a bit about your management style. (S03 415-416)

ur yeah what would you say in ur um this role ur what sort of criteria would you assess as being a big successful bank teller? (S07 450-451)

Inappropriate candidates' questions negatively influence the perceptions of candidates' professionalism in the interviews, e.g., by implying a lack of respect for the interviewers.

How did I do in the interview? And if I were successful when do I start? Just that whole lot of questions toward the end there. What was your reaction?
MJ
Not a smart thing to ask.
R
Because?
MJ
It's not something, it was almost like I need it, I want a decision now. That's almost arrogance, (MJ 669-678)

An example of a candidate asking poor questions is as follows:

I just got one last question. How did I do?
MJ
How did you do? Why, can't you explain? (S09 843-845)

The only successful candidate in the interviews, C10, was aware of the importance of asking questions, but cautious about asking culturally inappropriate questions.

... in here, you can always ask, can you see my opportunities, for example, can you see my opportunity like five years time, it's kind of clear objective, so Australian people says this question is OK., China is not good. They will that think you are not stable, you are not stable, you want, now you ( ) you should focus on what are you doing. (C10 1009-1014)

In summary, the quality of the candidates' questions was influential on perceptions. Candidates' questions can be influenced by culture. Candidates are rarely aware of the critical importance not only of asking questions in interviews, but of asking the right questions.

4.1.19. Interviewer experience

Definition: a candidate's experience of previous job interviews.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
interview experience	3	1	13	6

interview experience
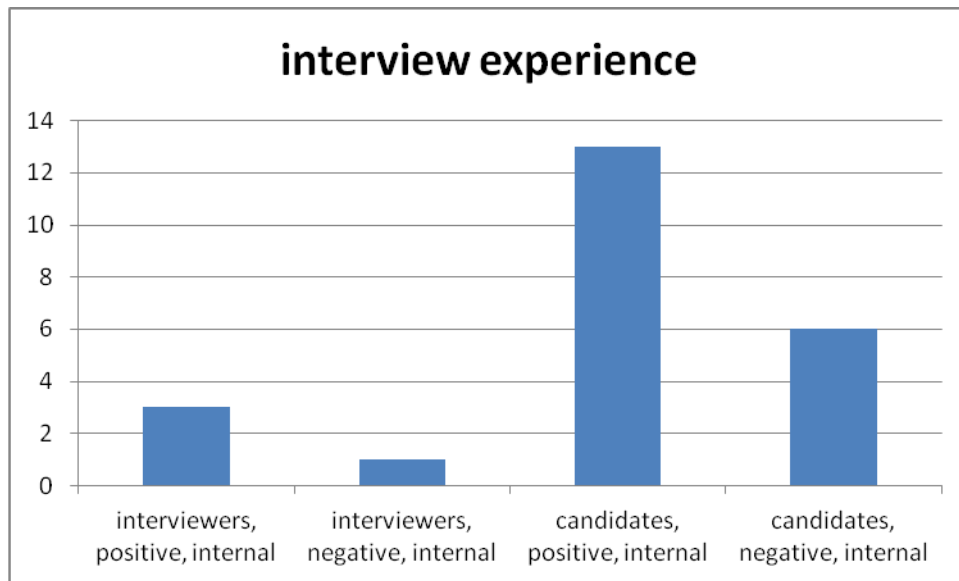
Active job searching results in a greater number of job interviews, which in turn predicts job offers (Saks, 2006). This suggests that interview experience impacts on interview outcomes, and this suggests, further, that interview experience influences perceptions. This study showed that although a weak internal factor, interview experience has a small influence on interviews and is perceived to be more important by the candidates than by the interviewers. The candidates were more positively than negatively influenced by this factor. In other words, while the interviewers appeared to overlook the importance of interview experience on their perceptions of the candidates, the candidates recognised the significance of interview experience, or lack of it, on their interview performance. Interview experience, although not a prevalent factor in the study, could, when it appeared, have a decisive influence on outcomes.

The critical importance of interview experience lies in the way it develops a candidates' cultural savvy.

Like the others, I feel that in ANZ, in HSBC, sometimes, the first time, second time, I ask them I will be failed, because I know I'm not perfect candidate, but I'm still want to attend, from attending, you can learn things. Sometimes you know you will be fail, like you can ask the interviewer, like what is the perfect answer for the questions, like, they may ask you like, what will you do in next five years time, then the first interview, even they say, maybe that, maybe that, maybe that, they not expect your answer is that. They expect you is, your clear mind, what is your opportunity in the future, what you want to do in five years' time? (C10 209-215)

Recent interview experience can also influence a candidate's confidence.

So, like August, August. So yeah, that was the first interview. And yeah, it was pretty nervous but at the same time it was challenging. (C04 96-97)

This is supported by the interviewers' belief, in the following extract, that lack of interview experience influences confidence.

When you're trying to, when you're being interviewed by someone you want to project yourself as being as confident as possible. It's possible that no attempt was made to deliver that, it's also possible he's got a lack of experience in interviews. But showing confidence is always a good thing. (MD 277-280)

Interview experience had a direct influence on C10's success in their interview.

I went to several interviews, and I found the questions quite similar, and I just record down, paragraph by paragraph, just prepare well, that's the only thing you can do, sometimes you can search website, (C10 368-370)

Interview experience allows the candidates to prepare for and thus perform better in interviews.

I suppose if I've been for more interviews experience I would have improved with, with, with, yeah, I think will get better with each interview. For a similar job (C07 541-542

In summary, interview experience was a small but critical influence on the candidates' performances in the interviews analysed in this study. Interview experience enabled the candidates to be better prepared for their interviews. A key part of this preparation was having the cultural knowledge and savvy to know what was expected in an interview and responding accordingly.

4.1.20. Accent

Definition: a participant's distinctive non-standard Australian speech sound.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
accent	14	5	0	1
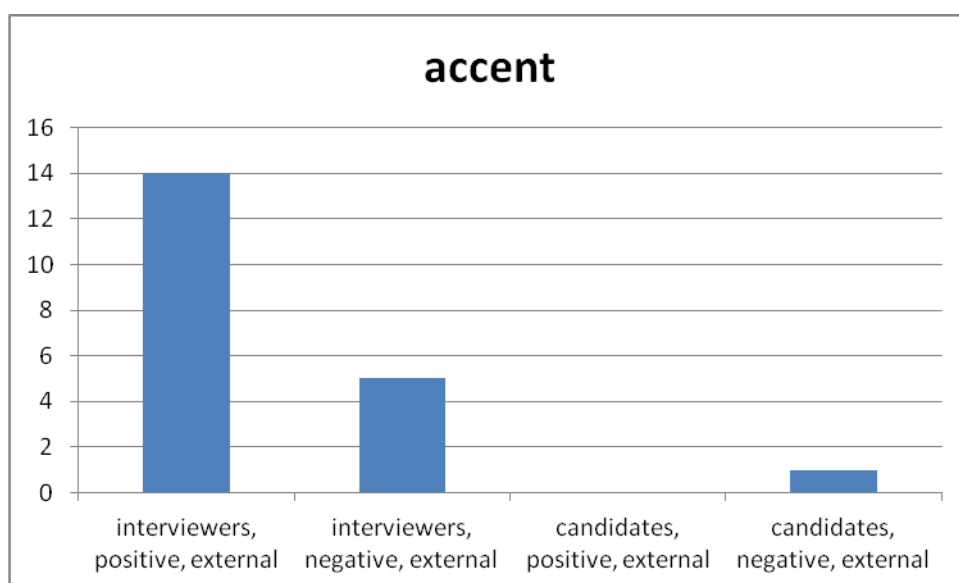
Accent is a weak external factor that has a small influence on interviewers and candidates in an interview. This factor has a greater influence on interviewers than on candidates, and it influences interviewers more positively than negatively. On the other hand, candidates attribute very little significance to the way their accents influence interviewers' perceptions of them. In other words, many candidates underestimate the influence of accent on perceptions. Unlike Singer & Eder (1989), who found that interviewers rated accent as moderately important in their selection decisions but that it is not significant in their decision outcomes, this study found that accent can be a decisive factor in outcomes. However, job type may be a complicating factor here, because accent may be more important for high-status jobs than for low-status ones (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda & Hopper, 1979). In this study, accent was important because it influenced the interviewers' perceptions of candidates' ability to deliver customer service and sales.

> *... sometimes the customer has trouble understanding the person on the phone. So with accent sometimes that could influence the interview because, it's kind of a bit hard sometimes. (MA 763-765)*

A few candidates were aware of the significance of accent for interviewers' hiring decisions.

> *To me, accent would be a concern for them. Because once you get accent, they would not feel like comfortable to talk with.*
> *R*
> *Yeah, yeah. The customers you mean will not be comfortable.*
> *C08*
> *Yeah and also the internal communication, the colleagues. (C08 716-721)*

The accents of the candidates in the research sample varied. On the whole, the interviewers were not influenced by the candidates' accents.

> *He had, I suppose he had an accent but I didn't find his accent, I find it was quite easy to understand it. I found he portrayed himself quite well. Accent certainly wasn't an issue. (ME 32-33)*

Negative perceptions were exacerbated when the candidates were nervous.

> *It is strong, as in when he's nervous, or when he's put in a situation where he's not comfortable, and it's if I can use the word thicker, so it's more pronounced. So there's times when we have trouble understanding him, (MK 188-190)*

In summary, the interviewers were concerned about accent insofar as it would influence the KSA factor. Accent can directly influence outcomes (Kalin and Rayko, 1978; de la Zerda and Hopper, 1979), but the analysis in this study went against the literature. In the literature, accent is generally thought to legitimise discriminatory decisions (Singer and Eder, 1989).

4.1.21. Interviewers' cultural background

Definition: an interviewer's non-Chinese cultural background.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
interviewers' cultural background	0	1	0	18

interviewers' cultural background
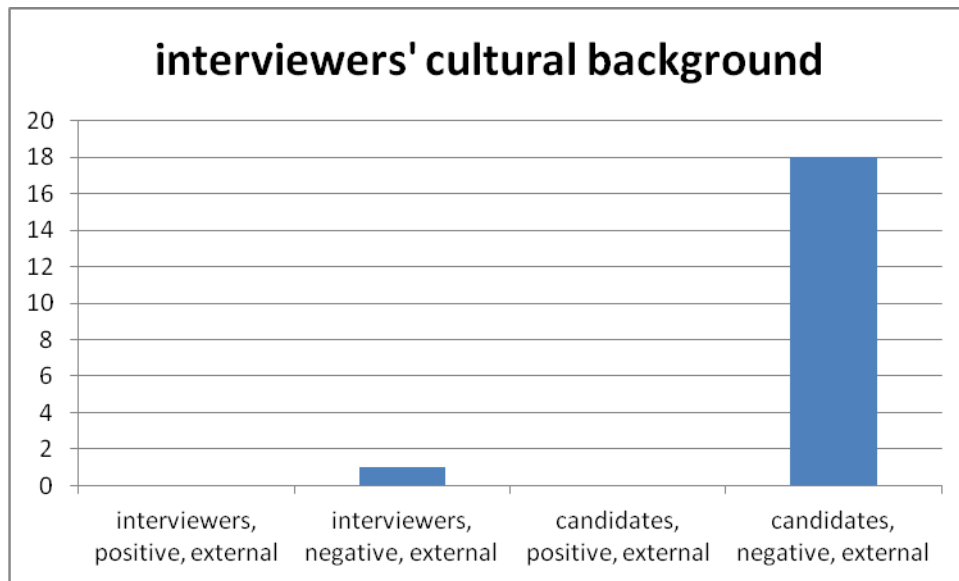
The degree of match between an interviewer's and a candidate's demographics can influence interview outcomes (Graves and Karren, 1996). Race-similarity has a greater influence than age and sex similarities in the employment interview (Goldberg, 2003). In this study, the interviewer's cultural background was another weak external factor that had a small influence on perceptions in an interview. Candidates were more influenced by this factor than were the interviewers. They were uncomfortable and anxious when interviewed by someone of a different culture, and this led to the negative perceptions that they had of themselves in the interview.

> *So the fact that MC is an Australian with an Australian accent and look*
> *Australian. How does that influence your experience?*
> *C03*
> *I think it makes me stressful at the first time. (C03 627-630)*

However, personality and age had a mediating effect on this influence.

> *It depends on that person who was interviewing me. If they were similar*
> *nationality but their personalities were not aligned with mine, then it would have*

been the same thing. It would have been the same, as if they were non-Asian.
(C01 697-699)

It's the nationality, if it was an Asian, like a 60-year-old Asian, then it wouldn't be, the intuition would have been that strong, the interview would have been that easy. The interviewer was also young too, so whether it was Asian, any age, because it was also young too, I could relate to her. (C01 1267-1270)

The interviewers' cultural background affected the candidates' confidence.

Maybe speaking easily, maybe more relaxed, more relaxed, you might be more open in the interview too. You might be a bit more open, with the person, with the interviewer, so you may say more, you might say things more confidently too. Same culture, I think you're just more relaxed, a bit more freely to say what you may think at that time. Cause sometimes in an interview there are things that you want to say, that did not come out right. In a similar culture, it may actually be easier to convey that idea to that person. (C01 704-709)

It also probably influenced the quality of the behavioural interviews.

I think if we come from the same cultural background and the example I use will be more acceptable for them, and they will have a stronger feeling in that example I will try and elaborate on that. (C03 580-582)

The interviewers' cultural background also influences their ability to communicate effectively in the interviews.

I think getting a grasp on the interviewer's background, might help you, 'cause I said that I was from a multicultural background, that might give more light on how that would impact cross-cultural studies because if I had a strong influence with my grandma being Chinese, then that would mean that I might be able to communicate with C03 more, so maybe impact, getting a bit more. (MC 1084-1088)

In summary, the interviewers' cultural background had a direct influence on the candidates' confidence and behavioural responses, but it also had an indirect effect on the interviews by making it harder for the interviewers to communicate cross-culturally with the candidates. However, it appears that the interviewers were either unaware of, or greatly underestimated, this influence of their cultural background on the interviews.

4.1.22. Extroversion

Definition: a candidates' degree of friendliness and communicativeness in interviews.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
extroversion	9	6	2	0
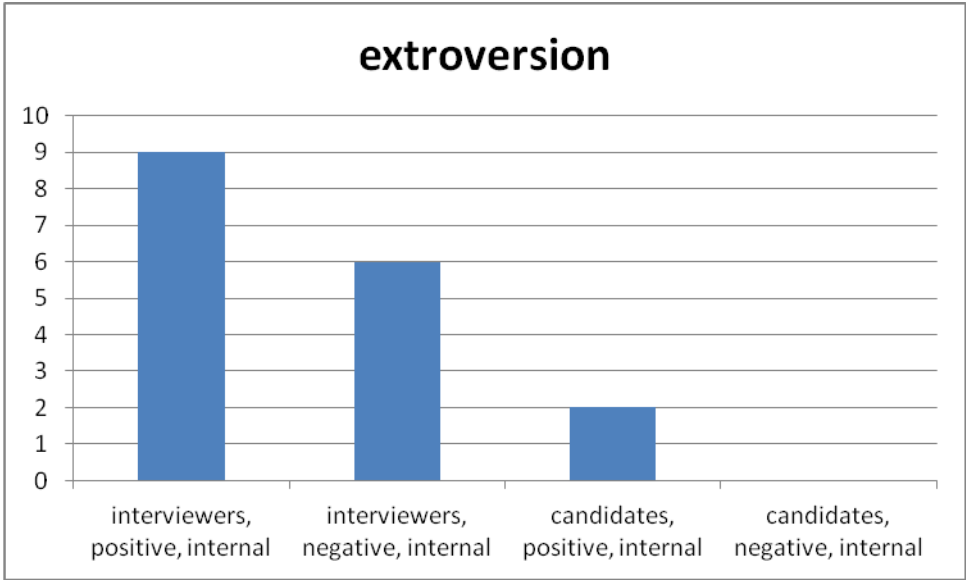
Extroversion is known to affect interview success (Caldwell and Burger, 1998). Extroversion is a weak, internal factor that has a small influence on perceptions in interviews. It would seem that although extroversion is not a prevalent influence on perceptions, it can be a decisive influence on hiring decisions.

In this study, extroversion influenced perceptions of the candidates' customer service and sales ability, and their suitability for the roles.

> *... he was perhaps quite a very timid person. Maybe a little bit more timid than we would like to put in that kind of role. Again because he would be on a daily basis for his entire shift, he'll be facing customers and having to engage with customers. And we thought that he might find it a little bit more uncomfortable than some of the other candidate that we chose. (MD 104-108)*

Extroversion was seen as manifesting itself through warmth, friendliness and being outgoing.

> *Well, she just um she kind of just very warm, and sort of friendly as well, like made eye contact, shook my hand and asked how I was. (MG 188-189)*

> *... here it got, because I am an outgoing person so I like to meet people. That's exactly what this business is about. So it's pretty much everything that she could have answered for (MI 522-524)*

The two extracts below illustrate the way the candidate's outgoing personality was positively perceived by the interviewer.

> *So how's your day been?*
> *C04*
> *ur it's been fantastic.*

MC

yeah?

C04

yeah, love this area, yeah.

MC

The building?

C04

Well yeah the building, the whole concept is open floor.

MC

Oh, it's beautiful, isn't it? I know, when I first came here, I was, like, mesmerised. It's, to be honest, it's actually nicer than our floor [C04: yeah] but ours is pretty good too.

C04

OK., are you also located here?

MC

No, no, we're in the city [C04: ur OK., OK.]. But, see how we have stairs in between each floor [C04: yes] we only have elevators. So, I know that the Challenger building [C04: yes] has the same set up. And it's, it's to make it, so like every floor's connected, do you know what I mean? [C04: mm] So every business unit is connected to one another, it's pretty good.

C04

Talk to other people, you can see other people.

MC

yeah it's a really good set up, it's really nice.

C04

It's fantastic [MC: yeah] (S04 2-29)

C04 I thought, I liked C04. I thought he was pretty outgoing. That's the kind of personality we needed for the role. (MC 109-110)

In summary, extroversion is not often perceived as a factor influencing perceptions, but it can, when it makes an appearance, be decisive in interview outcomes. Culture and the nonverbal factor mediate the influence of extroversion.

4.1.23. Education

Definition: a candidate's educational qualifications.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
education	5	3	3	3
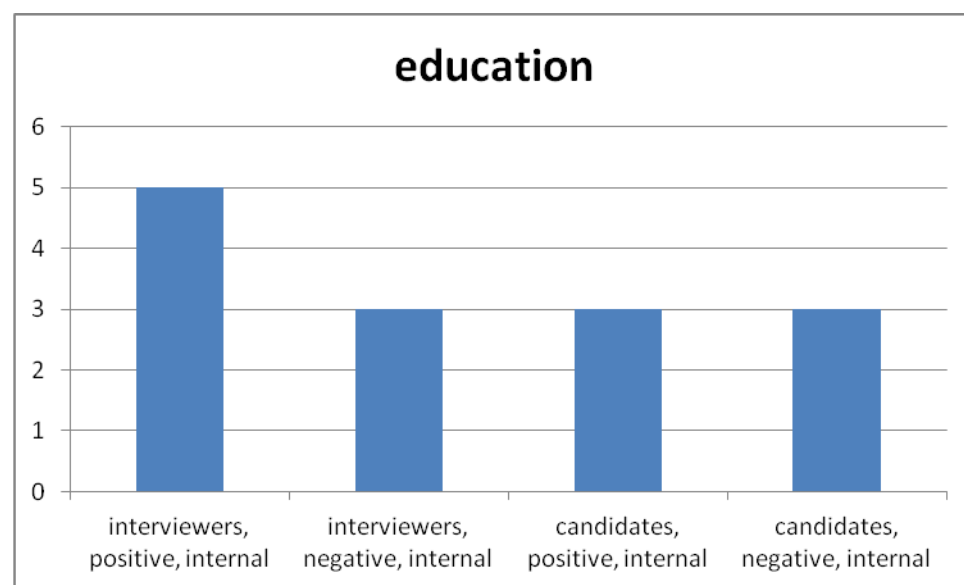
Education is a weak internal factor that has a small influence on the positive and negative perceptions of interviewers and candidates in interviews. It would seem that education is not an important influence on perceptions; however it influences career alignment. Contrary to expectations that highly-qualified candidates should be rated significantly better than poorly-qualified candidates (Haefner, 1977; Mullins, 1982), over-qualification can be a strong negative mediator. Although education is a relatively small factor, it is an important issue for the interviewers when the candidates are deemed over-qualified.

Her education background she'd probably be demanding probably about 70 to 75 thousand out in the market if she used her skills. So sometimes we try to understand the reason people are coming into the retail front to then get into the other part of the bank and that's what I've got to be mindful of because if I spend up to 50,000 in the first six months not only in education, training, and salaries to get this person up to speed, and then they walk out in six months, I've got a problem. Very costly. So that's probably one of the things, just looking at the background, and I'm thinking, OK. working in retail at the moment, doing education for this, she's really going to be focusing on the education piece, how long am I going to get her for, and what value is it for both of us. (MF 165-174)

The interviewer's concern about the candidate's over-qualification was highlighted in the following extract.

I just have a question about, obviously you've got, some qualifications, got your Masters, um where do you ideally want to take your career, like, like with, I know that, you obviously with your qualifications, pretty high [MK: mm] where do you see yourself in the next two to five years? (S10 267-270)

As discussed earlier under career alignment, overqualification can be costly to the employer organisation. However, if the candidate has relevant work experience, is able to demonstrate a genuine desire to commit to the role and contribute to the work that is being offered, and can show they are not using the job as a stepping stone for another position within the organisation, over-qualification is no disadvantage.

So I asked him where he was working now, and that was at that financial planning firm, so that correlates very closely to what we do, so I saw that as a huge benefit, to have somebody who already knew a lot of terminologies that we use, people you know, how to sell something to clients, and benefit statements to. He already had a lot of background he didn't realise was very very closely related to the bank, so for me I saw that as a big win that already had somebody who had that background knowledge, was obviously Chinese, could help me with that side of things. He was willing to start at the bottom, this is a boy who

already had financial planning experience, who said to me, I'm happy to start as a teller, I work full-time but I'm happy to go part-time so I can get a foot in the door. So it was a boy who was willing to take a chance on getting into the bank, rather than saying this is what I want. So we spoke about I guess what his aspirations were within the bank, was he coming here for six months and then try to be a financial planner, and his term was no, like he wasn't, he didn't, if I remember correctly he hasn't been to university, which surprises me to be honest, of the culture, OK., but he worked at a few different places, news agency and the financial planning firm which I can see correlated very closely, so he had the skills of, cash-handling skills too, so yeah had cash handling skills, had the financial planning background, was willing to start at the bottom. (MK 141-157)

Here the candidates seem to be aware of the lack of importance given to education by the interviewers. The only successful candidate, C10, was very aware of the importance of demonstrating passion for the role, so as to eliminate the interviewer's concern about his substantial tertiary qualifications.

To try, as AFSO try to get the person's passion is most important, and skills, experience, skills, probably for the customer representative role, education is not that important. (C10 883-884)

This can be a problem for Chinese candidates, who tend to value education.

Yes, because in China they more like concern about your qualification rather than experience. And here they more like focus on the experience rather than the qualification. Many people say, oh you apply for the job as a teller in AFSO. That's what TAFE students will do, not your like your masters or bachelor. (C08 571-574)

From this analysis, education appears to be an unimportant factor in interviewers' perceptions of candidates' suitability for roles. However, over-qualification can be a

stumbling block. This stumbling block can only by overcome by the candidate's convincing the interviewers as to their genuine passion for the role and their real desire to pursue a career in the area of the position being applied for. The interviewers' stated concern regarding over-qualified candidates contradicts the assumption sometimes made, that judging people as over-qualified is a covert form of racism (Dovidio, 2001). Relevant work experience and passion for the role mediates education.

4.1.24. Candidate pool

Definition: the other candidates who are competing for the same job.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
candidate pool	1	9	0	4
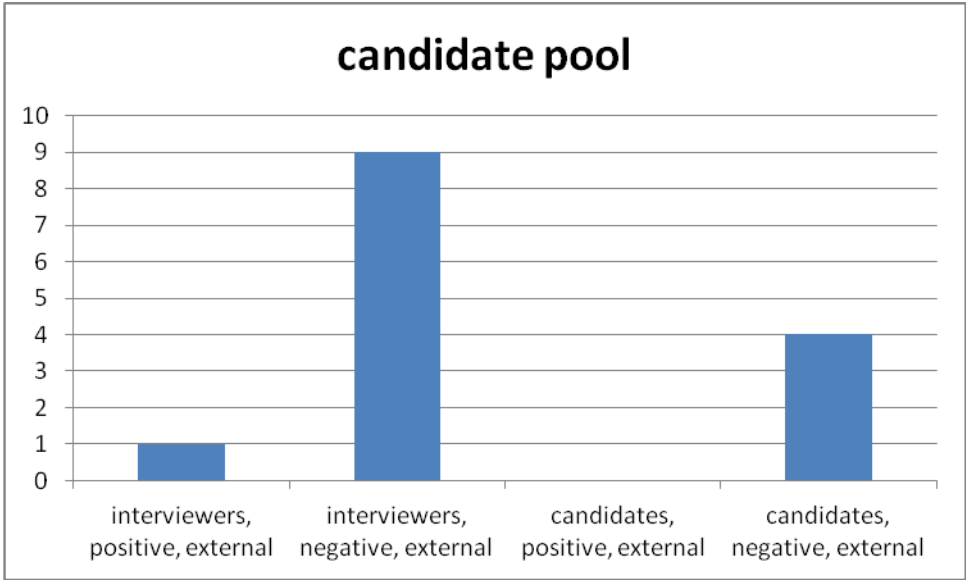
The candidate pool is a weak external factor with a small influence on perceptions. It would seem that it is not a prevalent factor but it can be decisive in hiring decisions.

The candidate pool refers to the other candidates who are competing for the same position.

> *... what we said was we interviewed more people, and we see what happened from there, so ML did other interviews and she probably found the other candidates they're much better and C11 yeah. (MM 283-285)*

The most common reason cited for preferring other candidates was experience.

> *I think maybe we had one or two when we spoke to had a little bit more experience. (MA 78)*

Candidates accepted that this was the reason for their failures in interviews.

> *... they will value me better, because they found some person much more experience and much more qualified in the position. Even though, I think I'm quite competent and quite qualified. (C05 571-573)*

Candidates also had the perception that internal candidates from the organisation had a higher chance of being successful in the interviews than outside applicants.

> *Probably have one or two ladies, coming from AFSO ( ). So everyone, the lady from AFSO, probably higher chance they get through get the job, because she's already in AFSO ( ) transfer. (C02 611-613)*

In summary, in this study the candidate pool was mainly significant in terms of the relative level of work experience among candidates applying for a role. Its influence

on candidates' success or failure in getting a role concerned the level of their work experience in relation to that of competing candidates. Internal candidates were seen as having an advantage.

4.1.25. Age

Definition: a participants' age.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
age	4	5	1	4
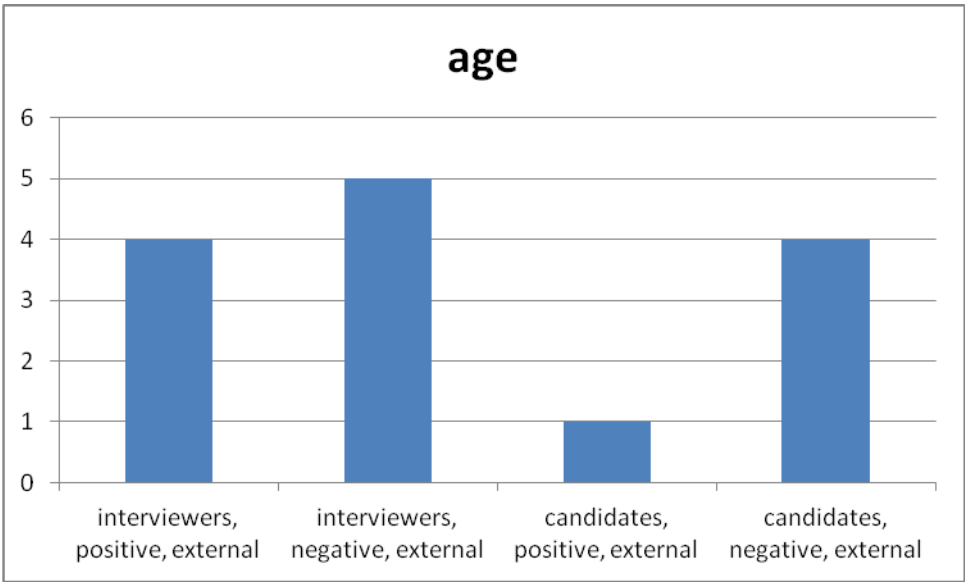
In this study, age was a weak internal factor that had a small influence on the positive and negative perceptions of interviewers and candidates in the interviews. This was contrary to general expectations that age and gender influence interview outcomes (Bright and Hutton, 2000). Here, they appeared to be of little importance to the interviewers. This may be attributed to the increasing implementation of

347

anti-discrimination legislation and policies in the workplace. It would seem that age is not a common influence on perceptions; however, it does affect outcomes.

Age can influence an interviewers' evaluation but it is not a decisive factor.

> *Yep, yep, I'm looking for certain demographics for my business, that he fits, he, I have existing problems with some of my staff around ages, maturity levels, C10 certainly was not his age, so C10's a young man, 23 or 24, does not behave like, he act like you know very, very mature for his age. (MK 96-99)*

Age influenced impressions of a candidate's suitability for a role.

> *And also looking, maybe they look at Asians, especially girls, they would think because we are tiny they will say too cute, and maybe I just guess, and they would say you look too young, but here I think they really like mature, even like 16, 17 years old. (C08 700-702)*

The interviewer's age can influence a candidate's confidence in an interview.

> *She's quite young and very friendly. Less stressful for me (C03 226)*

In summary, the age of candidates can influence interviewers' evaluations, and an interviewer's age can influence a candidate's confidence. Age can mediate perceptions but it is not a decisive factor.

4.1.26. Cross-cultural communication

Definition: the ability to speak a language other than English.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
Cross-cultural communication	10	0	3	1
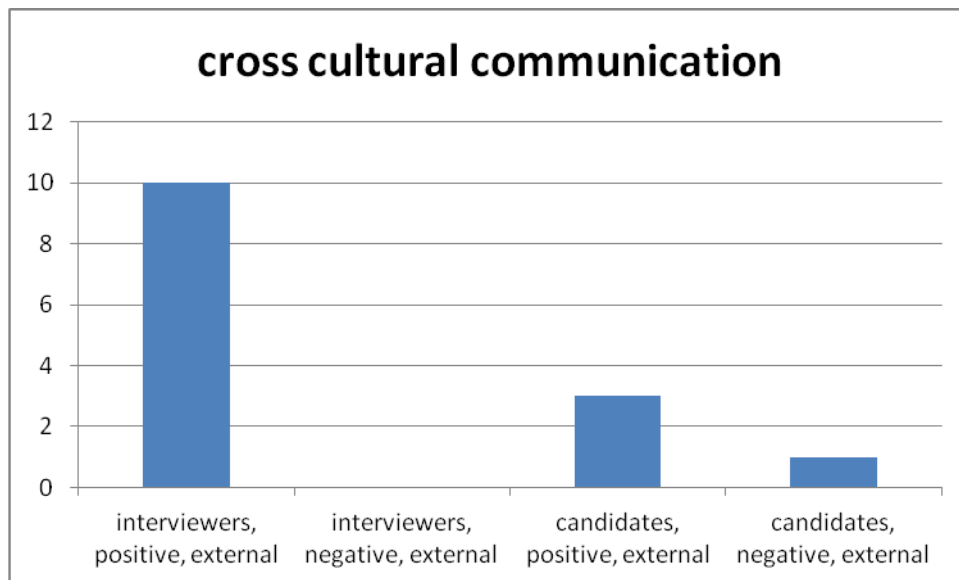
Cross-cultural communication is a weak external factor that has a small influence on the perceptions of interviewers and candidates in interviews. These perceptions tend to be more positive than negative. Although a weak influence, cross-cultural communication can affect outcomes.

The ability to speak a second language in addition to English is increasingly necessary for interviewers because of the changing demographics of the business environment.

> ... we actually push for people that actually talk a different culture, different languages, because we deal with so many people, we deal with all of Australia so, someone can speak Mandarin then bring it on, (MB 763-766)

Proficiency in another language, however, does not replace the need for proficiency in English, or skilfulness in customer service.

> *... as long as they speak well as in proper English, and if they speak Mandarin and that's their background, then that's just a bonus for us. (MB 766-767)*

> *... then he starts talking about the fact that he can speak Mandarin which is one thing, but you can't provide them with customer service then it's still nothing, you know what I mean. (ML 717-718)*

However, some interviewers gave greater priority to candidates who had a second language.

> *Language deficiency but we don't look at that as a negative because if it's not you know, because you take on the work in Ashfield, and 70, 80 per cent of customers are Chinese, it's a good thing, you know, build relationship in your own language. (MM 349-351)*

The ability to communicate when English is used but the customer is not proficient in it is another aspect of cross-cultural communication that was of interest to the interviewers.

> *... how do you approach a client, like obviously your your first language is obviously Chinese [C06: yep] how do you approach a person like this from Korea, how do you help them get what they need? How do you do that?*
> *C06*
> *ur actually when you sel- when I was at the AFSO, all the bank actually, we got the brochures [MF: yep] so brochures is with, it's a good aid for us for me [MF: yep] so, when you explain the product to the customer [MF: yep] or catalogue, everything, I show them, so point out, and ur write down the notes for them [MF: yep] so make them to, like easily to understand all the information [MF: yep] so I can cross the important thing, for example the call rate [MF: yep] how much*

for half minute [MF: yep] I cross out for them [MF: yep] so make them understand that [MF: OK.] yeah and ur follow the Korean people, they quite like the LG handset [MF: yep] so … ((MF interrupts)). (S06 526-537)

In summary, this analysis suggests that there is an increasing need to recruit candidates with a second language. The interviewers and candidates were aware of this need, and while the interviewers stressed the importance of customer service over a second language, the candidates did not seem to be aware of the relative importance of customer service. The importance of having a second language can sometimes depend on an interviewers' personal preference, based on the customer profile in a particular business area.

4.1.27. Hours and locations

Definition: hours of work and the place of the job.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
hours and locations	0	4	0	8
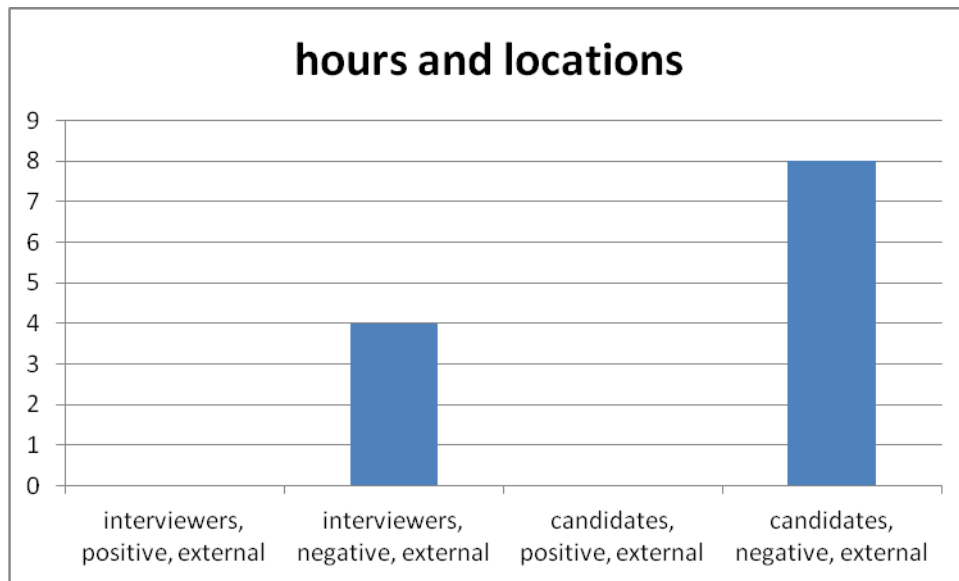
Hours and location were another weak external factor that had a small influence on perceptions in the interviews. The reason for this could have been that this factor was influential in the decision of whether to interview a candidate or not, and not a matter of how it may have influenced interviewers' evaluations of the candidates' ability to do the job. Although not a prevalent influence, hours and location were a decisive factor in hiring decisions.

As you can see it was going in the right direction until I mentioned part time. (C01 33)

Good outcome, you know. If, if the job was for the Mosman Branch, I felt that I would have got the job. (C07 234-235)

4.1.28. Job type and complexity

Definition: the level of difficulty of the job role in a particular setting and industry.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
job type and complexity	0	6	0	2
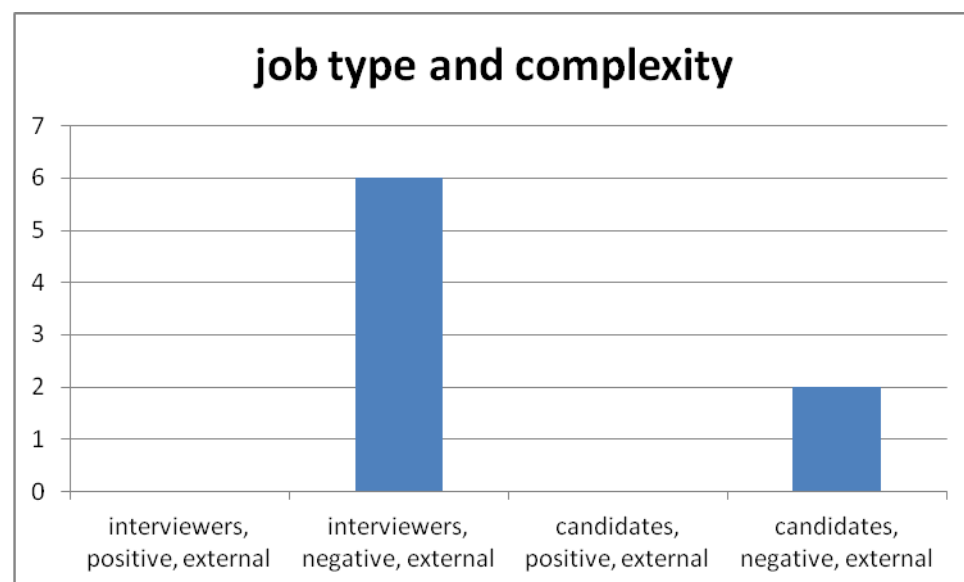
Job type and complexity is a weak external factor that has a very small influence on negative perceptions of interviewers and candidates in interviews. Job complexity influences interviewers' evaluations of candidates from cultures other than those of the interviewer (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998), and this study supports the view that job type and complexity can be a decisive factor in hiring decisions.

Job type and complexity influenced the perceptions of the candidates' ability to do the job. This factor was mediated by the candidate's English-language ability.

> *... now for this job, it's totally different, not just low level, it's much more high level ( ) no one in business banking, my English not very good (C02 660)*

4.1.29. Cultural exposure

Definition: exposure to people who speak a language other than English.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
cultural exposure	3	1	3	1
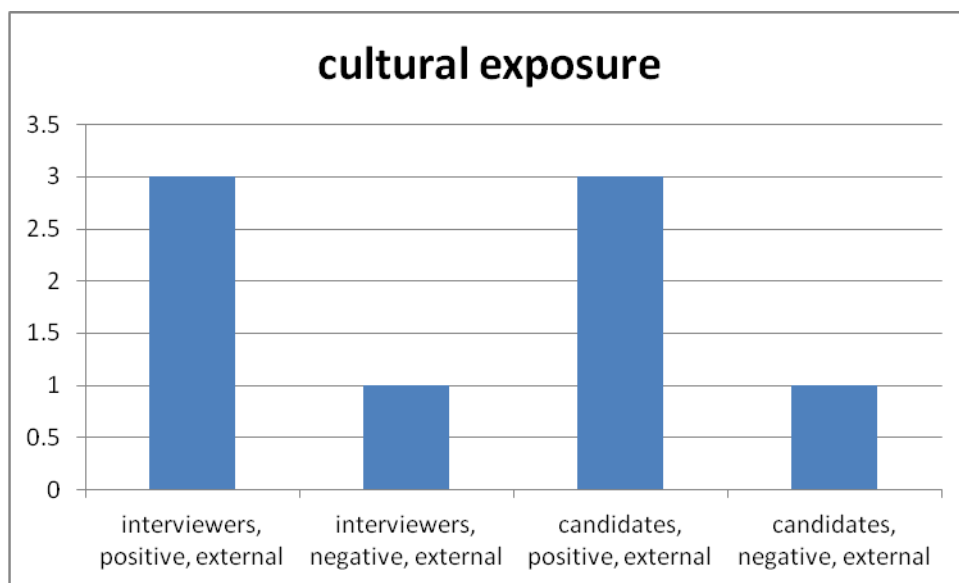
Cultural exposure is a weak external factor that has a very small influence on perceptions. Yet, length of stay in a different culture can improve the ability to recognise culturally-determined gestures (Molinsky, Krabbenhoft, Ambady and Choi, 2005) and hence influence outcomes.

Interviewers believe that cultural exposure influences candidates' English language fluency, views and openness.

I think she's been in Australia for a fair while. I don't think she's been in Australia for five minutes. She's got a couple of Australian colloquialisms, and a couple of little phrases there, I think they're there for sure. I think she's quite rounded in her views. Very open. (MF 819-822)

On the other hand, interviewers' exposure to other languages can help reduce the influence of culture in intercultural interactions (Neyer and Harzing, 2008).

Yeah, I don't know when I learnt German, I wasn't very good at it, I would say something to my teacher, and she would say you're saying that all wrong but she still understood what I was saying, like the words sometimes in different places, but you can still get the gist of what you're saying (ML 486-489)

By reducing the influence of culture in intercultural interactions (Neyer and Harzing, 2008), cultural exposure can contribute to interviewers' and candidates' ability to interact with one another.

I'll be honest with you, I did not feel any barrier between them and culture. I think it's because I've been mainly living in Australia for a long time. (C01 567)

I spent a lot of time with them, I understand them, (MK 304-306)

4.1.30. Relationship with peers

Definition: a candidate's potential relationship with work colleagues should they succeed in getting the role.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
relationship with peers	2	5	0	0

relationship with peers
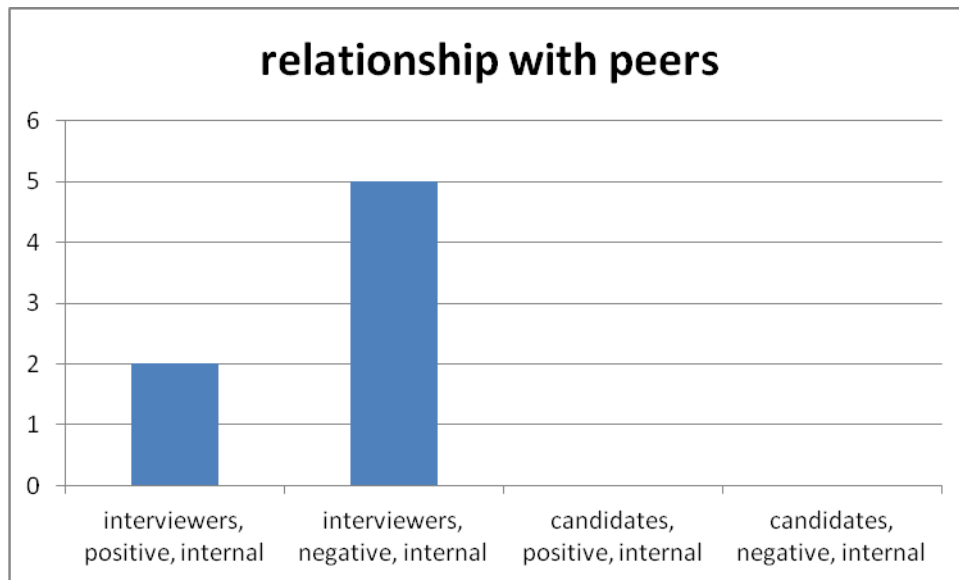
Relationship with peers is a weak internal factor that can have a decisive influence on interviewers' hiring decisions. Candidates however overlooked the influence of this factor in the interview.

Relationship with peers is characterised by cooperation and not competition, and the willingness to confront issues.

> *... he backs himself to be able to stand up on his own two feet, saying, what, I don't think you're doing something right, so he's not afraid, he's got a spine, if that makes sense. He's not afraid of saying to someone, I don't think that's the right way to do it. (MK 749-752)*

Negative perceptions were created by the candidate over-stepping the boundary in regard to conflict resolution.

> *... then she took on to the superior side of it, and said I would ask every team member to write down on paper or email classify what the job description is.*

That is initiative again, that she's taking. And as a strong team player re-clarifying what her job expectation and what other job expectations are. The only concern for me with that would be if she was a team member with the branch. If she took her initiative to do that, it could get people off side. (MI 586-591)

The importance given by the interviewers in this study to this factor was consistent with the literature on person-organisation fit theory (Morley, 2007; Sekiguchi, 2007). Interviewers are concerned with candidates' ability to do the job as well as how they will go about doing it. The latter is referred to as "citizenship behaviours" (Sekiguchi, 2007, p. 121) and reflects the congruence in values between the interviewers and candidates. In so far as values are culture-based, this value congruence is a fit between the culture of the organisation and the candidates' culture. The finding that candidates give little priority to the importance of team relationships is also supported by person-organisation fit theory (Carless, 2005). In the latter longitudinal study, the author found that candidates' job acceptance intentions were not related to perceptions of person-organisation fit.

4.1.31. Coping with pressure

Definition: the ability to work under pressure and meet targets using techniques such as organisation and multitasking.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
coping with pressure	0	4	0	0

coping with pressure

A bar chart titled "coping with pressure" with a y-axis ranging from 0 to 4.5 in increments of 0.5. The x-axis categories are: "interviewers, positive, internal", "interviewers, negative, internal", "candidates, positive, internal", "candidates, negative, internal". Only the "interviewers, negative, internal" category has a bar, reaching a value of 4.
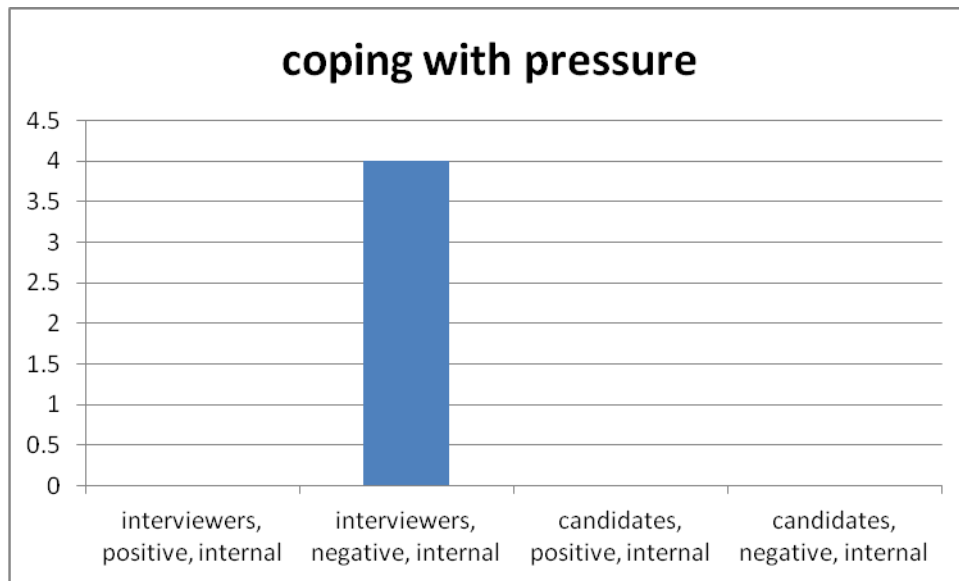
Coping with pressure is a weak internal factor with a very small influence on interviewers' perceptions. In contrast to the interviewers' who are mindful of the importance of candidates' ability to work under pressure, candidates appear to be unaware of the significance of this theme in interviewers' evaluations.

It can be a decisive influence in hiring decisions. This factor is mediated by parenthood and the ability to provide evidence using behavioural techniques, as discussed elsewhere in this chapter.

The ability to work under pressure is perceived as the ability to be organised, to be able to multitask, and to be able to work in a busy environment and still meet targets.

I like the fact that he's got a list. That shows me he's organised (MJ 217)

So he's been pretty successful using the diary so ((reading)) you can multi task, so can you give me an example when you do multi task. (MJ 236-237)

4.1.32. Atmosphere

Definition: the general feel of a place, e.g., calm, fun.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
atmosphere	0	0	3	1
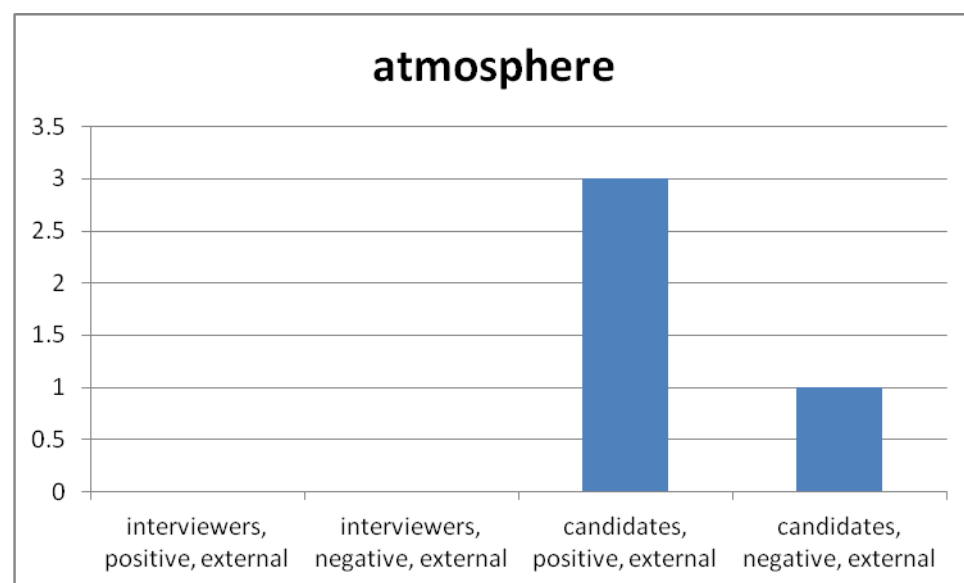
Atmosphere is a weak internal factor with a very small influence on candidates' perceptions. It has a mediating effect on outcomes.

This study suggested that an atmosphere of fun, calm and peace helps candidates to relax in an interview.

It was a nice calm environment. (C01 1051)

they make the atmosphere very peace, so you can speak your own true thinking.
(C02 545-546)

Even make the atmosphere more relax for me. (C02 550)

4.1.33. Relationship with manager

Definition: a candidate's potential relationship with the interviewers, should they be successful in getting the role.

	interviewers, positive, internal	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, positive, internal	candidates, negative, internal
relationship with manager	2	1	0	0
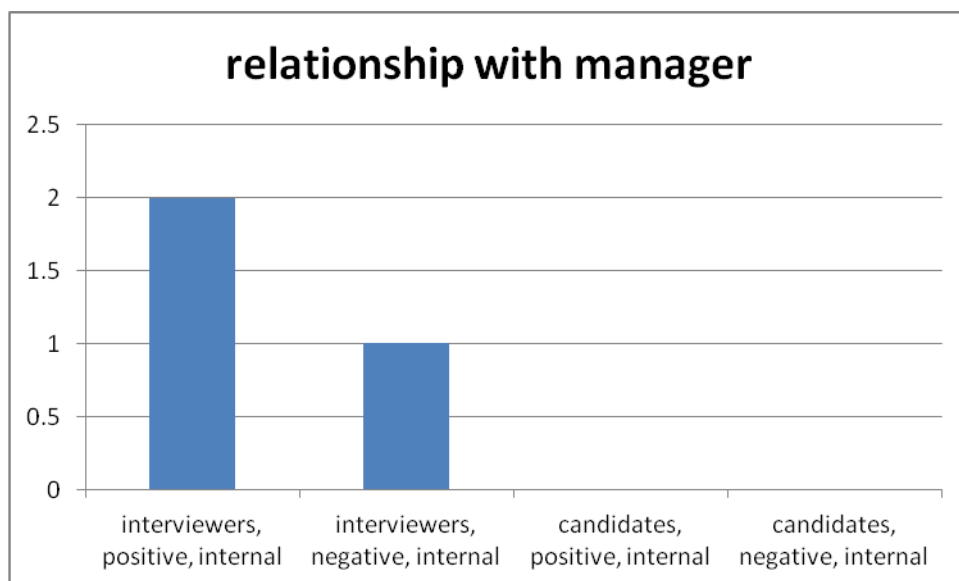
The 'relationship with manager' factor is perceived differently in western and Asian interviews (Otlowski, 2008). This difference has a very small influence on interviewers' perceptions. However, it has a decisive influence on hiring decisions.

In this study, while interviewers appreciated the respect candidates showed in the interviews, they also expected the relationships to be more equal.

> *... as I said, like that's what you're told to say. I think he should push it back on the manager and say you're an absolutely arse, this customer hasn't done anything wrong in 20 years, we should actually do this. (MJ 567-569)*

An example of when a candidate effectively demonstrated a willingness to challenge the manager is given below.

> *So how do you make sure that the team is all working together towards common goal?*
> *C10*
> *Yes, my current working experience is, kinda, system, a systems role, like just the financial planner to interview with clients, and then record the meetings, general minutes, and I help the financial planners to prepare any investment reviews ur Sometimes we have discrepancies, like like one client come to our ur firm's, and say, he is, very young, very wealthy, and get a high income every year, and he he like investment, and manager may say like ur I recommended him to to invest into growth fund, like 85 per cent in the risky assets, 15 per cent in the defensive cash, and ur, I may write reason I pointed out like that ur you know the guy ur is quite young and ur quite wealthy, like risk-lover, you know, we may invest more in the risky assets like all growth, like 100 per cent in the growth funds, in the growth assets. But the manager says, it may not working because of different situations and problems, and ur, we sometimes we we try to, not argue, but we try to persuade each other, it's a good way because its, the process of, we solve a discrepancy is in the process we helping the customer, and help them to find the better solutions, how to serve them to get wealthy. (S10 149-165)*

4.1.34. Interviewers' panel

Definition: one or more interviewers interviewing one candidate at the same time.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
interviewers' panel	0	0	0	2
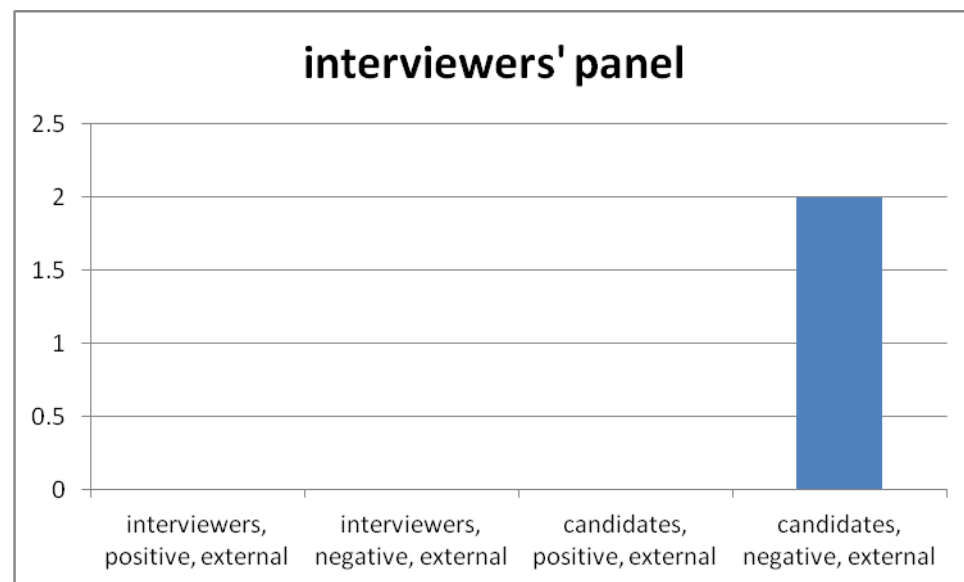
The interviewers' panel is a weak external factor with a very small influence on candidates' perceptions. It can influence outcomes. However, candidates' preference mediates this factor.

> *So I don't know, what was that about. But overall improvement I'd say, maybe one on one interview would be better. I feel more comfortable with one on one. (C08 840-841)*

4.1.35. Parenthood

Definition: whether a candidate has or does not have children.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
parenthood	2	0	0	0
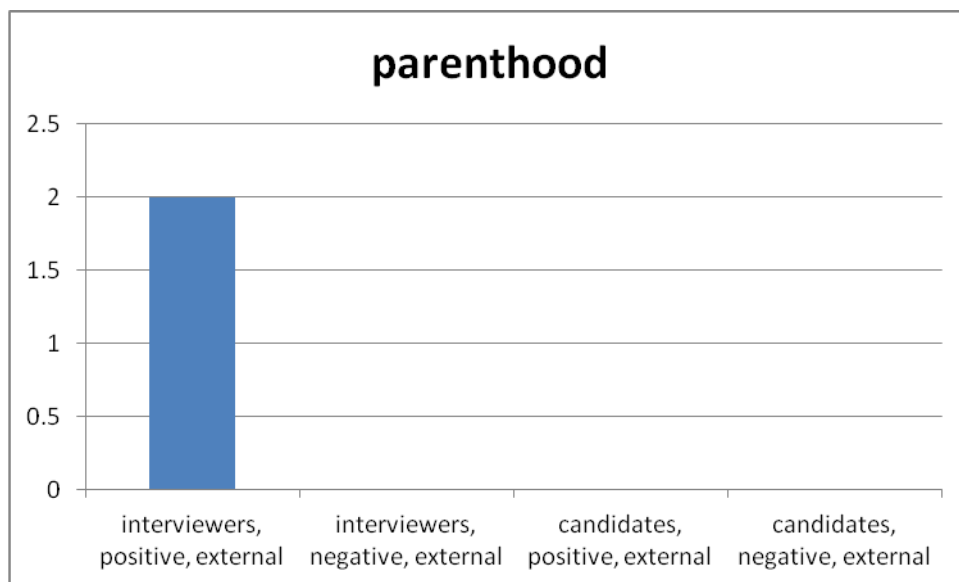
Parenthood was a weak external factor in the interviews, with a small influence on interviewers' perceptions. The interviewer, MG, assumed that parents would be good at coping with pressure. Parenthood may have influenced interview outcomes.

> *Cause they must, I just, I think she'll be, I think, that might be categorising people but in all my experiences in any jobs mothers are just fantastic cause they are just doing everything, on the go. (MG 309-311)*

4.1.36. Luck

Definition: getting a job by chance.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
luck	0	0	0	1
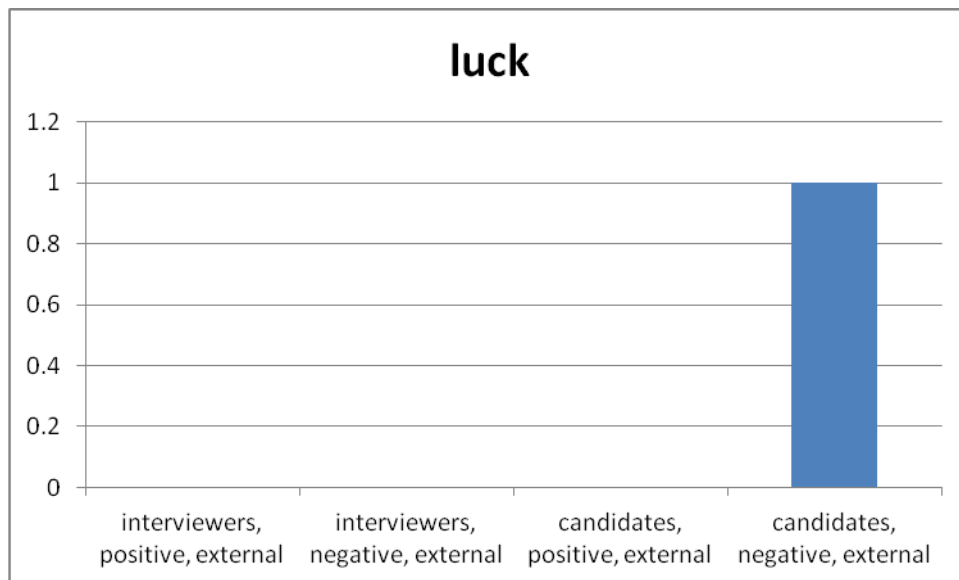
Luck is a weak internal factor with a small influence on candidates' perceptions. It may be a mediating factor on outcomes.

Sometimes they need a bit luck. So I thought I would in. (C08 166)

4.1.37. Gender

Definition: whether a participant is male or female.

	interviewers, positive, external	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, positive, external	candidates, negative, external
gender	1	0	0	0
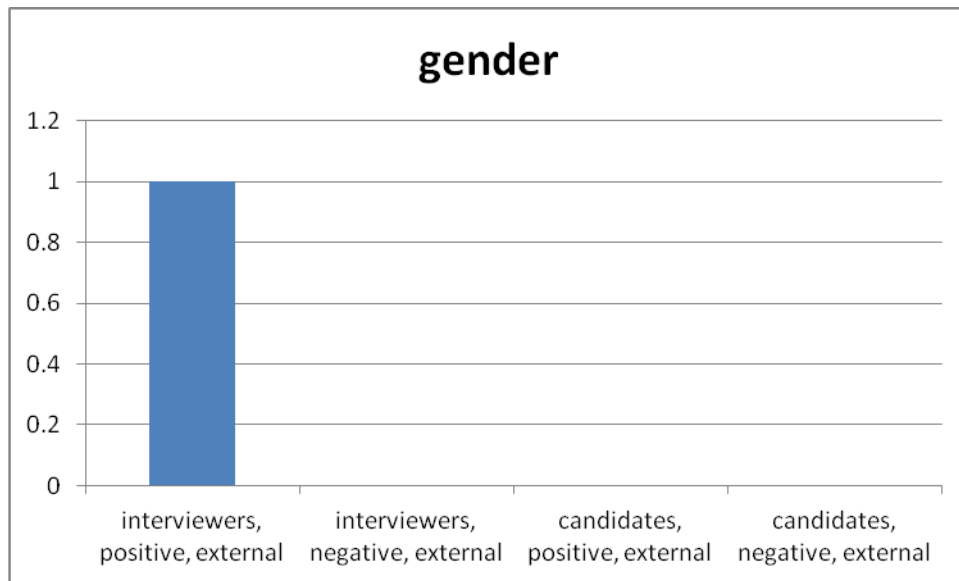
Gender is a weak external factor with a very small influence on interviewers'
perceptions. Like the age factor, this may be attributable to the increasing
implementation of anti-discrimination legislation and policies in the workplace.
However, the need for gender balance in the workplace can mediate this influence.

> *Exactly, so from my point of view, he was what I was looking for, you know, I
> wanted a boy, just because of the dynamics of the current area, but yeah ideal.
> (MK 285-286)*

This demonstrates a problem that can arise in selection process, when there is a clash
between the right of the candidate for the selection process to be free of gender bias,
and the right of the interviewer to seek gender balance in the workplace.

4.2.   Influence of attributions on perceptions

The above analysis suggests that attributions influence perceptions in various ways,
and that interviewers and candidates were attributing their perceptions differently. The

influence of internal and external attributions on positive and negative perceptions supports the finding that attributions are important in the intercultural interview. Table 2a and Table 2b below show the relation between perceptions and attributions in the interviews. The first table shows the prevalence of the codes by the number of coding references and the second table shows the prevalence of the codes by percentage of text.

Table 2a: Attribution differences between positive and negative perceptions (by coding references)

	external	internal
negative	276	279
positive	161	386
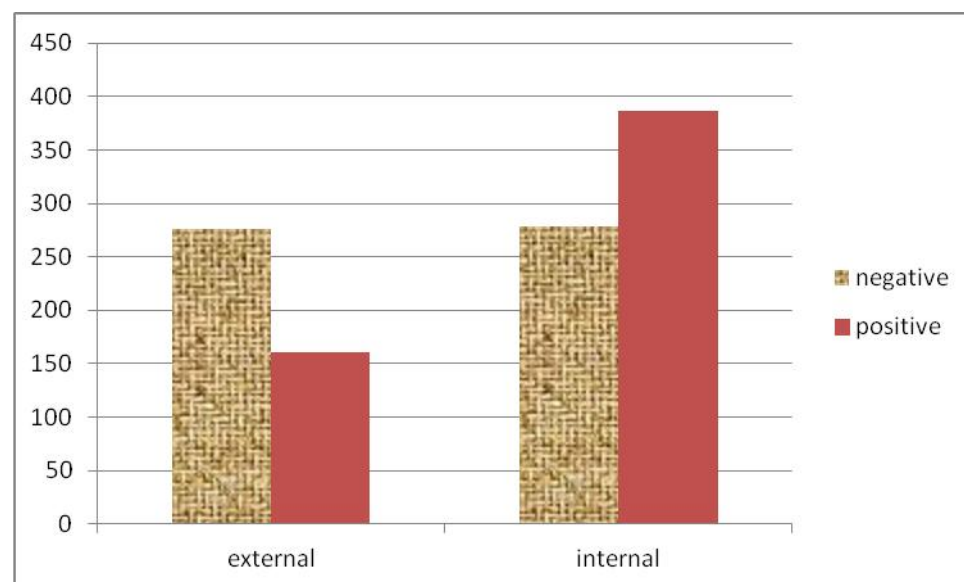
Table 2b: Attribution differences between positive and negative perceptions (by
percentages)

	external	internal
negative	48.70%	51.30%
positive	30.07%	69.93%
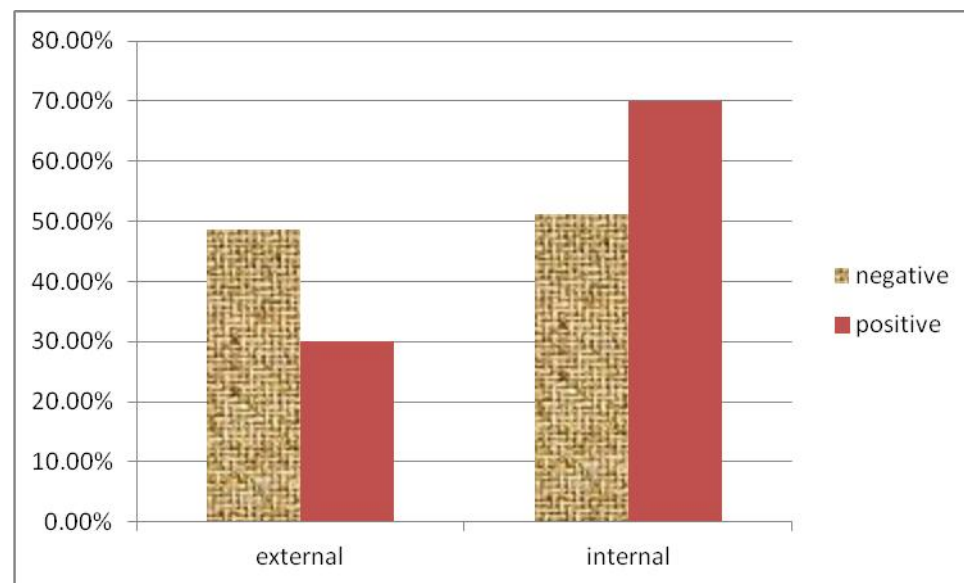
Table 2 supports the view that attributions are important in perceptions, especially

positive perceptions. Table 2b shows that 48.70% of negative perceptions were

attributed to external causes and 51.30% to internal causes. But in the case of positive

perceptions, 30.07% were attributed to external causes and 69.93% to internal causes.

These results indicate that attributions are related to positive and negative perceptions

in different ways. While there is a very strong tendency for positive perceptions to be

internally attributed, this tendency is less strong for negative perceptions, although

there is still a slight tendency to attribute internally. The study by Rowe and her

associates cited in Dipboye and Macan (1988) shows that positive first impressions

are likely to result in the attribution of good qualities to internal causes and the

attribution of poor qualities to external causes. The first extract below is an example of a positive first impression attributed internally to the candidate's presentation, and the second extract is an example of a negative first impression attributed externally to the interviewer's preconception.

> *He was good, he presented well, he was smiling which is always good for front line staff that was important. (ML 103-104)*

> *… you don't normally perceive like a corporate as friendly and so maybe I did have a preconception (MC 790-791)*

Support for the significance of attributions for interview outcomes is seen in the above analysis.

4.3. Influence of attributions on interviewers and candidates

An analysis of the influence of external and internal attributions on the interviewers and candidates supports the finding above that attributions influenced the non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates differently, which further suggests that attributions may be affected by culture. Table 3a and Table 3b, respectively, show the prevalence of the codes by the number of coding references and by percentages of text.

Table 3a: Attribution differences between interviewers and candidates (by coding

references)

	external	internal
interviewers	157	493
candidates	282	170
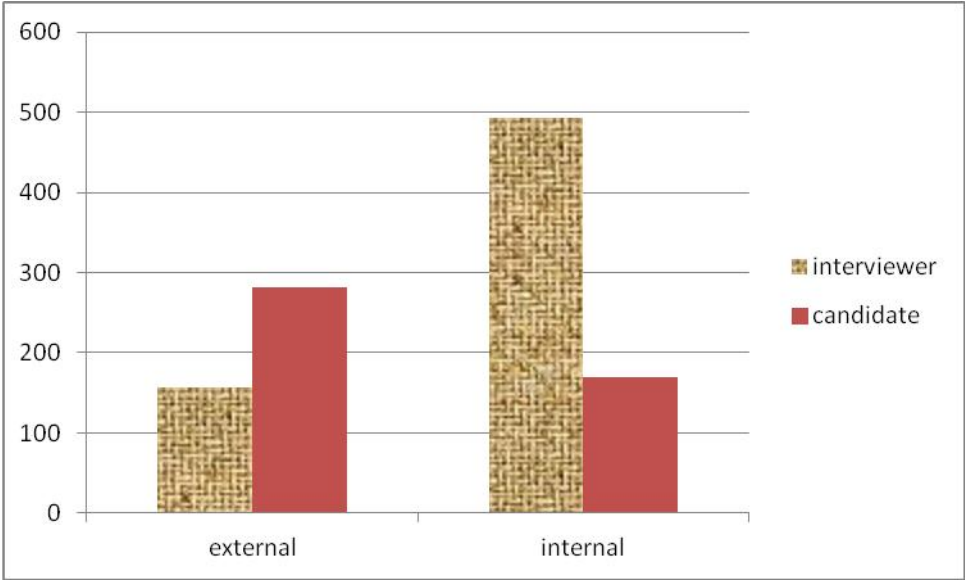
Table 3b: Attribution differences between interviewers and candidates (by

percentages)

	external	internal
interviewers	21.14%	78.86%
candidates	69.72%	30.28%
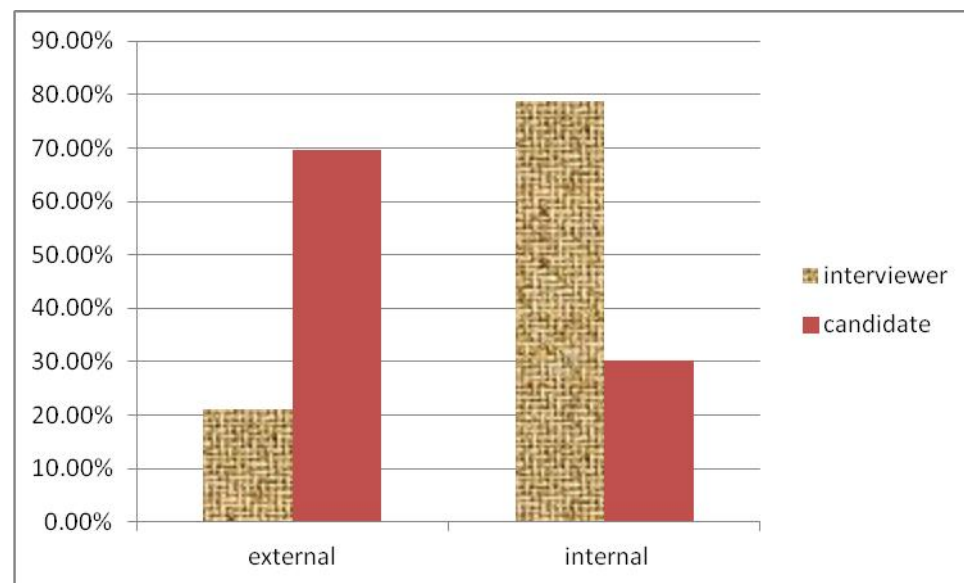
Table 3 shows the extent to which the interviewers and candidates attributed their

perceptions to external and internal causes. Table 3b suggests that the interviewers

and candidates attributed their perceptions in significantly different ways. The

interviewers attributed 78.86% of their perceptions to internal causes and only 21.14%

to external causes. This contrasts strongly with the candidates, who attribute 69.72%

of their perceptions to external causes and only 30.28% to internal causes. This shows

that the interviewers attributed much more of their perceptions to internal factors than

to external factors, but this is the reverse of what applied in the case of the candidates,

who attributed much more of their perceptions to external than to internal factors.

This means that the interviewers and candidates differed in how much their

perceptions were attributed to the candidates and to factors that were external to the candidates.

People look for explanations of others' apparently incomprehensible behaviour, and may even make external attributions by blaming their lack of understanding on the other party (Hall and Hall, 1990). Alternatively, they may internally attribute superior wisdom to themselves. Members of individualistic and secular societies tend to explain happenings more in internal terms. Those of more collectivist cultures look for explanations more externally. In the analysis above, the non-Chinese interviewers from individualistic Australia attributed 78.86% of their perceptions to internal factors, while all the candidates, who attributed more of their perceptions to external factors (69.72%), came from the collectivist Chinese culture. The outcomes so far validate the proposition that culture in the form of communication is a significant factor in intercultural selection interviews. Culture influences interview outcomes, and is seen in individualistic Australian interviewers making internal attributions while collectivist Chinese candidates make external attributions. The extracts below illustrate the contrasting views of interviewers and candidates involved in the same interview. While MH attributed a candidate's confidence to the candidate's personality, the candidate attributed her confidence to the interviewer.

I guess, as I said, she wasn't shy but she wasn't extrovert either. I guess you perceive people who are a lot more extroverted can take the conversation in a different direction to be a lot more confident. That's my perception, it's an individual perception. But perhaps if there was a bit more of, maybe emphasis in her voice and, a bit more extrovert in her personality. (MH 307-312)

… because a lot of jobs with, where the interviewers are not as good, you come away feeling awful. (C07 495-496)

371

4.4. Attributions of perceptions by participants

A further analysis of the interviewers' and candidates' attributions to positive and negative perceptions supports the view that attribution was an important variable in the interviews. Table 4a and Table 4b present the results of this analysis.

Table 4a: Participants' attributions of perceptions (coding references)

	interviewers	candidates
negative, external	80	196
negative, internal	213	66
positive, external	77	84
positive, internal	282	104
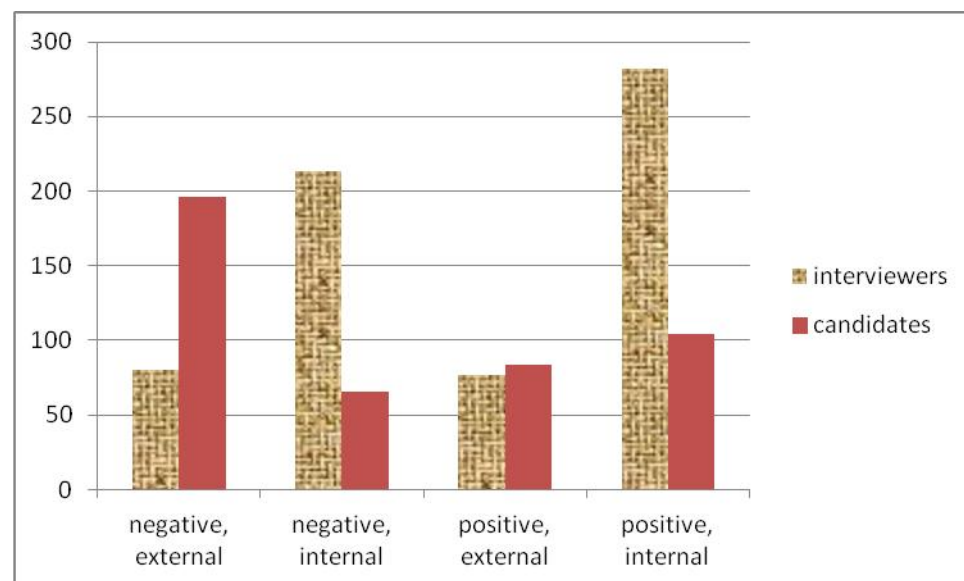
Table 4b: Participants' attribution of perceptions (percentages)

	interviewers	candidates
negative, external	10.10%	53.97%
negative, internal	40.29%	13.37%
positive, external	10.99%	15.57%
positive, internal	38.62%	17.08%
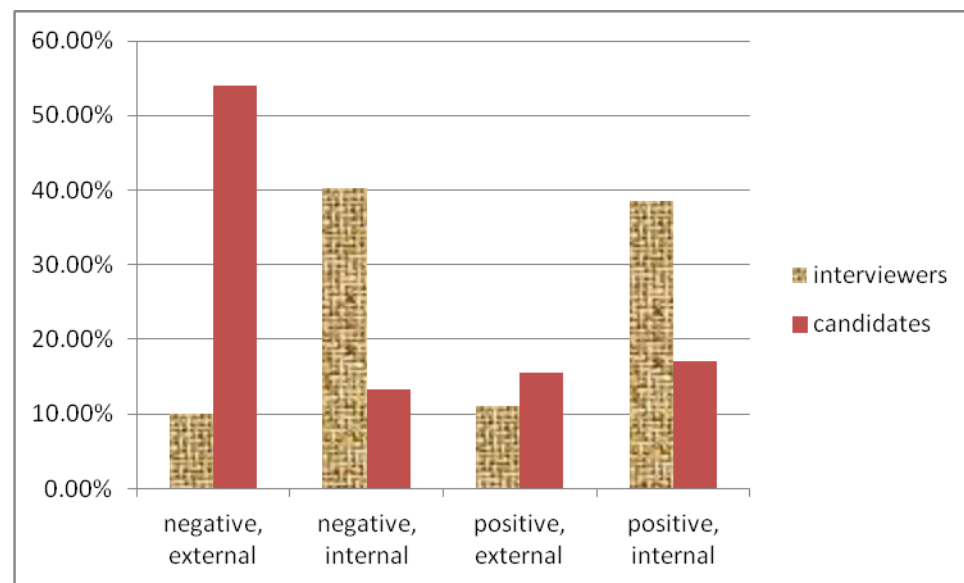
There are substantial differences in how the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates attributed their positive and negative perceptions. The most significant difference was among the negative attributions to external causes. While interviewers attributed only 10.10% of their negative perceptions to external causes, candidates attributed 53.97% of their negative perceptions to external causes, a significant difference of 43.87%. Candidates primarily attributed their negative perceptions externally to cultural savvy, interviewers' cultural background, and pre-interview conditions.

If you know the local knowledge, the culture from Australia ( ) it's much more easier. (C02 681)

That would have not, that would not probably, I think it would actually help if I was interviewed by someone of the same nationality. (C01 671-672)

I guess my focus was all on the team bonding session, that went for an hour. So my energy was wasted on that. (C04 477-478)

The interviewers primarily attributed their negative perceptions externally to English language proficiency, their own behaviour, and the candidate pool.

I don't think her English was as strong as other people, so that obviously did have a bearing on the interview. (MC 722-723)

I couldn't control that interview and they were my exact words when I walked out, I couldn't control the interview, I didn't want to speak over him so we let him talk, we weren't going to stop him and say OK. that's enough talking we just went oh OK. that's where it went wrong I think. (MB 315-318)

The process met my expectations that the experience of the candidate that I was looking for compared to other candidates that I had at that time didn't meet my expectations around the key parts of the role that I would look for. (ME 501-503)

A lesser but no less significant difference of 26.92% existed between the attribution of negative perceptions to internal causes, i.e., 40.29% for interviewers versus 13.37% for candidates. Interviewers primarily attributed negative perceptions internally to the verbal factor, interview preparation, work experience and career alignment.

I think it was just having inconsistency. I think I started off the interview, every behavioural question I answered very well. Towards the end of the interview I

think I didn't have that kind of consistency to keep my answers very succinct, it kinda like, a bit like, I talked a bit about irrelevant stuff that's not going to be healthy. (C09 64-71)

If I spend more time in the preparation for that job. (C05 340)

... if I have customer service in the banking area before, I will do it better job in there, and they will value me better (C05 573-574)

My concern was the role itself. I didn't think the role would suit, doesn't really match my true ability. From what I've experienced, from the skills that I've learnt, from the degree that I've got, I didn't think the role in the call centre, was not matching with my true skills. (C01 134-136)

Candidates primarily attributed negative perceptions internally, also to the verbal factor and career alignment, but in addition, to customer service and sales.

I know with C02 that it was very hard to head in that direction because we would ask a question and then he'd just keep going so we couldn't really, it wasn't structured. (MB 310-311)

Like some people wanted to come to the bank to get the foot in the door, work in an associate for a few months, work for the AFSO, then go for a graduate program. In all honesty I thought she was already there. (MC 142-144)

So in this one we talked about, exceptional customer service, and he seems to, struggle with the answer to this question, cause he jumps between the sales side of it, he's initial reaction is customer service or that sales target, which obviously, that's not really not what we're looking for. (MK 502-505)

A similar difference of 21.54% existed between the attribution of positive perceptions to internal causes, i.e., 38.62% for interviewers versus 17.08% for candidates.

Interviewers primarily attributed positive perceptions to internal factors – the verbal factor, customer service and sales, career alignment and candidates' questions.

> *I think it was fine. I think it went good. He told us some good information about himself. Made us interested in him (MA 135-136)*

> *He used a few examples of how he works and how he deals with customers in Harvey Norman. And they were spot on. They were spot on. MB and I actually discussed that later, and we were wow he knows his customers pretty well, how to deal with customers and about the customers walk into the store you kinda back off, don't attack them straight away, things like that, I appreciated that, he was really good. (MB 727-732)*

> *He was willing to start at the bottom, this is a boy who already had financial planning experience, who said to me, I'm happy to start as a teller, I work full-time but I'm happy to go part-time so I can get a foot in the door. So it was a boy who was willing to take a chance on getting into the bank, rather than saying this is what I want. So we spoke about I guess what his aspirations were within the bank, was he coming here for six months and then try to be a financial planner, and his term was no (MK 147-153)*

> *What do you need me to do to hire me. Like what characteristics are you looking for? It's sort of just a, it's a great question. (MG 465-467)*

Candidates primarily attributed positive perceptions to internal factors – interview efficacy, interview experience and the verbal factor.

> *I usually go into interviews quite confidently, to be honest with you, I'm actually quite confident. (C01 155-156)*

> *Maybe I'm already getting used to it because everybody would do that. Like greeting, like they're routine.*
> *R*

So you're familiar with how they interview in Australia.
C08
Yeah, already. (C08 378-383)

Finally, in comparison to the above observations, the difference between the interviewers and candidates regarding their externally attributed positive perceptions was a mere 4.58% – 10.99% for interviewers versus 15.57% for candidates. Overall, the above analysis confirms that attributions of perceptions among the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates were different, and hence that attributions in intercultural interviews can be influenced by culture. 'Fundamental attribution error' is the phenomenon of ignoring or underestimating situational factors (Fiske and Taylor, 1991, p. 67; Shirazi and Biel, 2005, p.96) and the tendency to attribute one's own behaviour to the situation but others' behaviour to their person (Kanter and Corn, 1994, p.20). The analysis shows that 'fundamental attribution error' was prevalent in the analysed intercultural selection interviews.

5. CONCLUSIONS

On the 11 January 2012, an Australian national newspaper, *The Australian*, featured an article 'Multiculturalism divides again' (Karvelas, 2012). The article reviewed the ongoing love-hate relationship that Australia has with multiculturalism. In 1972, multiculturalism became part of the then Labor government's policy. Over 20 years later, in 1996, multiculturalism was pushed into the background by the then Liberal government. In 2007, the newly elected Labor government headed by Kevin Rudd proceeded to bring multiculturalism back into the government's policy agenda, only to have it de-emphasised again in 2010 by Julia Gillard, the Labor leader who had ousted Kevin Rudd from the Labor leadership position. In February 2011, immigration minister Chris Bowen launched a passionate defence of multiculturalism and took the issue to the forefront of the political and social landscape again. While multiculturalism may be a political football, the phenomenon seems here to stay (Cook-Gumperz, 2001). A parliamentary inquiry is currently under way to gather practical ideas that can help further the cause of Australian multiculturalism. Cultural training for prospective employers of migrants and migrant employees has been one major outcome of the inquiry.

The overarching aim of this thesis is to better understand intercultural competence in interpersonal communication, and to help develop a practical training program for Australian employers and migrant workers in the workplace. In this sense, this overarching aim fits the broad direction of multiculturalism that Australia is pursuing. To achieve this aim, the key situation of the selection interview has been holistically

explored to identify the factors that influence positive and negative perceptions of Chinese candidates' fit with jobs and organisations.

To restate the first key research question of this study:

What are the factors influencing intercultural selection interview outcomes when non-Chinese interviewers interview Chinese candidates for entry level positions in a large financial services organisation in Australia?

This chapter summarises the findings of the thesis, discusses the implications of the results for theory and practice, explains the limitations of the study, and suggests directions for future research.

5.1. Major themes influencing the interview

The study found that the 37 factors influencing the intercultural selection interview can be categorised into nine overarching themes made up of five internal themes and four external themes. Communication and culture were predominant. These themes and their respective factors are listed below. The first five themes are internal and the rest are external. The strength-order of the factors and their respective number of coding references are in brackets. For example, candidates' questions were the 18th most prevalent factor, with 25 coding references. The factors in each theme are listed in order of their prevalence beginning with the most prevalent to the least prevalent.

Theme 1: Communication theme

    Factor 1: Verbal (1, 158)

    Factor 2: Impressions (9, 45)

Factor 3: Nonverbal (10, 45)

Factor 4: Two-way interaction (11, 43)

Factor 5: Candidates' questions (18, 25)

Theme 2: Professional assets

Factor 1: Career alignment (4, 74)

Factor 2: Work experience (8, 48)

Factor 3: Meaning of work (12, 41)

Factor 4: Education (23, 14)

Theme 3: KSA theme

Factor 1: Customer service and sales (7, 52)

Factor 2: Relationship with peers (30, 7)

Factor 3: Coping with pressure (31, 4)

Factor 4: Relationship with manager (33, 3)

Theme 4: Interview readiness

Factor 1: Interview efficacy (6, 60)

Factor 2: Interview preparation (16, 27)

Factor 3: Interview experience (19, 23)

Theme 5: Personality theme

Factor 1: Work ethics (14, 28)

Factor 2: Extroversion (22, 17)

Theme 6: Cultural theme

    Factor 1: Cultural savvy (2, 85)

    Factor 2: English language (5, 70)

    Factor 3: Accent (20, 20)

    Factor 4: Interviewers' cultural background (21, 19)

    Factor 5: Cross-cultural communication (26, 14)

    Factor 6: Cultural exposure (29, 8)

Theme 7: Interviewing theme

    Factor 1: Interviewers' behaviours (3, 79)

    Factor 2: Interviewers' question quality (13, 37)

    Factor 3: Interviewers' panel (34, 2)

Theme 8: Situational theme

    Factor 1: Pre-interview conditions (15, 28)

    Factor 2: Physical environment (17, 27)

    Factor 3: Candidate pool (24, 14)

    Factor 4: Hours and location (27, 12)

    Factor 5: Job type and complexity (28, 8)

    Factor 6: Atmosphere (32, 4)

    Factor 7: Luck (36, 1)

Theme 9: Demographics theme

    Factor 1: Age (25, 14)

    Factor 2: Parenthood (35, 2)

    Factor 3: Gender (37, 1)

An analysis of the data by themes and participants' perceptions reveals (1) the prevalence of certain themes over others in the perceptions of candidates' performances in the interviews, and (2) the different ways in which the themes influenced the interviewers and candidates. Table 5 lists the themes in the order of the strength of their influence on the interviewers' perceptions according to their prevalence in percentages. NVivo calculated the percentages based on the amount of text in each theme relative to the interviewers' and the candidates' respective overall amounts of text across all the themes. The percentages for the nine themes in the interviewers' column should equal 100%, subject to rounding, and the same holds for the candidates' column.

Table 5: Themes influencing interviewers' and candidates' perceptions

THEMES	INTERVIEWERS' PERCEPTIONS	CANDIDATES' PERCEPTIONS
1. communication theme	36.27%	7.87%
2. professional assets theme	19.69%	8.59%
3. KSA theme	15.95%	1.19%
4. cultural factors	14.14%	34.00%
5. personality theme	4.05%	0.58%
6. situational theme	3.44%	12.87%
7. interview readiness theme	3.17%	13.10%
8. interviewing theme	2.17%	20.71%
9. demographics theme	1.12%	1.10%
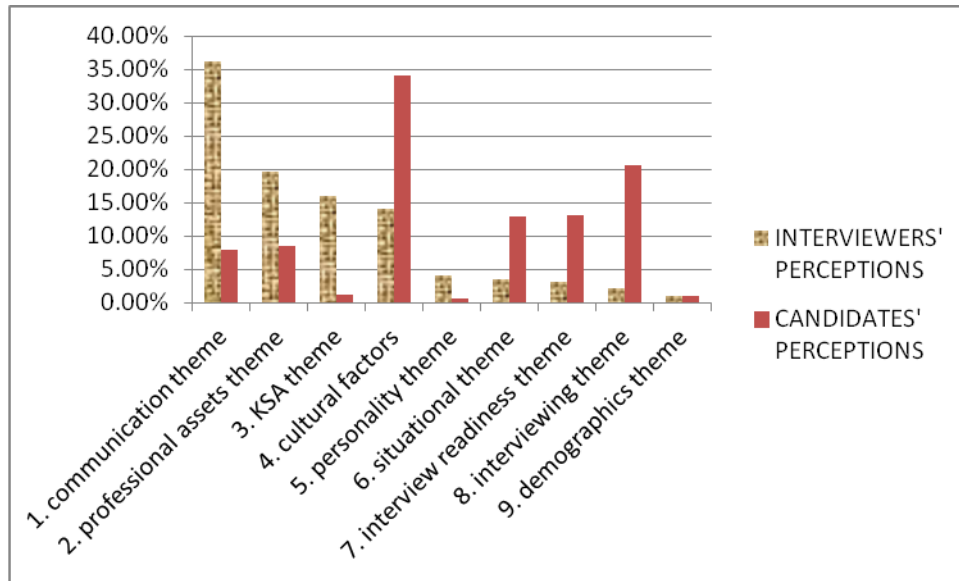
The remaining part of this section addresses the sub-research questions and discusses additional themes in the interviews.

5.1.1. Sub-research question 1: The communication theme

Sub-research question 1:

Do candidates' communication factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in intercultural structured behavioural description interviews?

The communication theme is comprised of the following factors:

Factor 1: Verbal (1, 158)

Factor 2: Impressions (9, 45)

Factor 3: Nonverbal (10, 45)

Factor 4: Two-way interaction (11, 43)

Factor 5: Candidates' questions (18, 25)

Table 5 above shows that communication was the most prevalent theme influencing the interviewers' perceptions in the intercultural interviews (36.27%). Of the various communication factors, the verbal factor, which encompasses the various attributes of a behavioural interview, was a critical factor. Impressions, the nonverbal factor and two-way interaction were moderate influences, and candidates' questions were a weak influence. The significance of communication lies partly in the fact that there must be effective communication between interviewers and candidates for an interview to take place.

> *He was very clear. He communicated as I say that was the main thing for me. He communicated very very well. He was very clear about his answers. He answered the questions reasonably well. And he provided us with information we needed. (MD 67-69)*

Communication is the single most important determinant of success in the employment interview process (Kacmar and Hochwarter, 1995; Young and Kacmar, 1998; Daly, Barker and McCarthy, 2005). Communication is not only a highly sought-after quality in the workplace (Daly, Barker and McCarthy, 2005) but is also significant in the influence it has on interviewers' perceptions of a candidate's other qualities, i.e., KSA, interview readiness, personality and professional assets. Young and Kacmar (1998) examined the verbal behaviour of candidates in interviews to pinpoint specific verbal behaviour that was influencing the interview. Specifically, the candidates' verbal statements were shown to influence interviewers' ratings of the candidates' KSA and personality characteristics. These ratings ultimately impact on the fitness assessments of a candidate and hence on the hiring outcomes of the interview. This analysis shows that the verbal factor within the communication theme

is a critical influence in the interview, and hence supports the assertions made by

Young and Kacmar (1998).

The strength of the influence of communication on interviewers' evaluations can be

further seen from the fact that interviewers consider communication to be a critical

job requirement for a role, therefore making it a significant variable in the evaluation

process. The following data extracts from the interviewer's debriefs in the present

study validate this point.

> *I think it's just the communication, that's all it was. I don't think he was on the*
> *same level as we were on. (MB 679-680)*

> *Yeah, yeah, that's what I do. Sort of I think yeah if if I can't relate to the person I*
> *find it hard for customers to sort of relate to them as well. (MG 150-151)*

The interviewers indicated that communication had the most influence on their

evaluations of the candidates. Furthermore, they attached much more importance to it

than the candidates did (36.27% versus 7.87%). However, the candidates were

nevertheless also aware of the importance of communication in an interview.

> *Yes, I think so. And obviously they will have a list of criteria too, criteria for*
> *experience, what sort of people they are looking for, communication skills,*
> *presentable, there must be many. They obviously should be ticking those sorts of*
> *things off. (C01 282-284)*

5.1.2. The professional assets theme

Professional assets are comprised of the following factors:

Factor 1: Career alignment (4, 74)

Factor 2: Work experience (8, 48)

Factor 3: Meaning of work (12, 41)

Factor 4: Education (23, 14)

Table 5 shows that in this study the second most prevalent theme to influence interviewers' perceptions when evaluating the candidates was professional assets (19.69%). Career alignment is one of the four factors making up this theme and it is one of the five strongest factors to influence the interview. The other factors making up professional assets are the moderately strong factors of work experience and meaning of work, and the weak factor of education. This theme is stronger for the interviewers than for the candidates (19.69% versus 8.59%). This suggests that candidates were underestimating the importance of the theme for interviewers' perceptions.

Career alignment is influenced in opposing ways by two factors – namely, passion for the role and education. The strongest positive influence on career alignment is passion for the role and the industry, and the strongest negative influence is education – in particular, over-qualification.

I always like people that sound really passionate and I think he sounded really passionate about his background, his background is in finance, he sounded really passionate about the industry and I think probably that stood out the most (ML 111-113)

It depends on their degrees. That was my initial thought. I thought she's a very smart girl and on the intellectual level I'm sure she got a very very high I.Q. So what's her motivation for down the track I think that's when you really start asking questions. My job pays here is about 38,000a year for a start. Her education background she'd probably be demanding probably about 70 to 75

thousand out in the market if she used her skills. So sometimes we try to understand the reason people are coming into the retail front to then get into the other part of the bank and that's what I've got to be mindful of because if I spend up to 50,000 in the first six months not only in education, training, and salaries to get this person up to speed, and then they walk out in six months, I've got a problem. Very costly. So that's probably one of the things, just looking at the background, and I'm thinking, OK. working in retail at the moment, doing education for this, she's really going to be focusing on the education piece, how long am I going to get her for, and what value is it for both of us. (MF 162-174)

The above extracts highlight the importance of commitment to the department as opposed to commitment to the organisation.

The significance of establishing the strong prevalence of professional assets is that the literature has appeared to focus on KSA and personality at the expense of candidates' professional assets. One reason for this could be that as skills become more accessible, particularly through global mobility, interviewers are increasingly concerned about employee retention. Career alignment is one way to ensure retention of skills in the workforce.

5.1.3. Sub-research question 2: The KSA theme

Sub-research question 2:

Do candidates' knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

The KSA theme is comprised of the following factors:

Factor 1: Customer service and sales (7, 52)

Factor 2: Relationship with peers (30, 7)

Factor 3: Coping with pressure (31, 4)

Factor 4: Relationship with managers (33, 3)

KSA was the third most prevalent theme among the interviewers, but for the candidates the theme ranked only seventh. In other words, KSA ranked much more strongly for the interviewers than for the candidates (15.95% versus 1.19%), which suggest that the importance of KSA to the interviewers was also underestimated by the candidates. Within KSA, customer service and sales is a moderately influential factor, and coping with pressure and relationship with the manager and peers are weak factors. This seems to contradict the commonly held belief that selection interviews are about assessing the capability of candidates to do the job (Sekiguchi, 2004; Carless, 2005). The extract below highlights the importance of KSA to the interviewer.

> *In summary, I think the main purpose or the main objective would be to make sure the person, the candidate is going to fulfil the job properly and is culturally the right fit. That's the nutshell. (MC 449-451)*

The verbatims above suggest that person-job and person-organisation fit are as crucial in the intercultural interview as in any other selection interview. However, this thesis shows that KSA does not appear to have the strongest influence on perceptions, because, as seen from the communication discussion, communication has a very strong moderating influence on KSA. In other words, perceptions of KSA are couched in terms of communication.

5.1.4. Sub-research question 3: The cultural theme

Sub-research question 3:

Does culture have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the

intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

The cultural theme is comprised of the following factors:

Factor 1: Cultural savvy (2, 85)

Factor 2: English language (5, 70)

Factor 3: Accent (20, 20)

Factor 4: Interviewers' cultural background (21, 19)

Factor 5: Cross-cultural communication (26, 14)

Factor 6: Cultural exposure (29, 8)

Culture is an external factor that can influence the employment interview and mediate

its outcomes (Hough and Oswald, 2000; Latham and Millman, 2002). It is the most

significant external theme to influence interviewers' perceptions of candidates, and

the two most prevalent factors within it are in the top five strongest factors to

influence interviewers i.e., cultural savvy and English language proficiency. The

remaining factors are weak factors made up of accent, interviewers' cultural

background, cross-cultural communication, and cultural exposure. This analysis

suggests that cultural savvy is a stronger influence than English language proficiency

when its influence on the perceptions of communication and other themes, such as

KSA, is taken into account.

> *China like the manager they want is, you obey the manager, so, if you come*
> *forward some new ideas how to improve your service sometimes too many ideas*
> *not good thing, like like you know, sometimes people feel like, branch manager,*
> *feel like the branch is my domain, you can't change. (C10 600-603)*

Culture influences selection criteria and related behavioural indicators, which makes it a very important theme for interview outcomes.

> *Yes, culture a bit different cause different background, and the service like the*
> *criteria for them to like, range the customer service, and the way we range the*
> *customer is a little bit different as well. (C06 578-580)*

Culture was not only the most important theme to the candidates; it was much more important for them than for the interviewers (34.00% versus 14.14%). This difference suggests that the candidates were much more aware of the influence of culture than the interviewers were. There are several possible reasons for this. Firstly, research on the role of culture in selection interviews argues that the impact of culture in selection interviews is significant (Gumperz, 1978; O'Grady and Millen, 1994) because culture is communication (Hall, 1969) and communication is culture (Ronen, 1984; Goodman and Monaghan, 2007). Secondly, candidates perceive communication as a significant negative factor impacting on their suitability for a role, for two reasons: (1) they feel that they are unlikely to perform well in the interviews because they assume their having a different ethnic background from an interviewer will affect their ability to communicate, and (2) they are more likely to attribute a poor performance to lack of communication skills than to other variables because communication skills are an important requirement for the job that they are being interviewed for. Thirdly, in this study interviewers perceive communication as a significant negative factor impacting on candidates, for similar reasons: (1) all the candidates were ethnic Chinese, and (2)

the interviewers perceived communication as a primary requirement for the role.

Fourthly, the interviewers and candidates both perceived communication as a strong positive factor, which shows the significance given to communication when candidates are being selected for customer service roles. This analysis outcome shows the mediating role of culture, in the form of communication, in intercultural selection interviews.

5.1.5. Sub-research question 4: The personality theme

Sub-research question 4:

Do candidates' personality factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?

The personality theme comprises the following factors:

Factor 1: Work ethics (14, 28)

Factor 2: Extroversion (22, 17)

Interviewers' perceptions of a candidate's personality are related to interview decisions (Anderson, Silvester, Cunningham-Snell and Haddleton, 1999). Personality was the fifth most prevalent theme influencing interviewers' perceptions in this study, and the least prevalent among those influencing candidates' perceptions, but both interviewers and candidates appeared to be to some extent influenced by it (4.05% versus 0.58%). The theme contains the two weak factors – work ethics and extroversion – with work ethics having the greater influence on perceptions. The lack of influence of personality calls into question the significance attached to

person-organisation fit in the literature. Nevertheless, personality is an important selection criterion among interviewers.

> *I've got a fairly good idea of my team here and how, what the personality of the team's like, whether they can be a good fit for the team, that type, whether they're going to suit the organisation base, and stuff like that. (ME 227-230)*

Like KSA, communication may have been over-riding perceptions about the personalities of the candidates. Moreover, culture may have been affecting the perception of extroversion and work ethics.

5.1.6. Sub-research question 5: The situational theme

Sub-research question 5:

> *Do situational factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in intercultural structured behavioural description interviews?*

The situational theme is made up of several factors, as follows:

Factor 1: Pre-interview conditions (15, 28)

Factor 2: Physical environment (17, 27)

Factor 3: Candidate pool (24, 14)

Factor 4: Hours and location (27, 12)

Factor 5: Job type and complexity (28, 8)

Factor 6: Atmosphere (32, 4)

Factor 7: Luck (36, 1)

All the factors that make up the situational theme are weak, with the most prevalent being pre-interview conditions and physical environment.

> *I guess my focus was all on the team bonding session, that went for an hour. So my energy was wasted on that. (C04 479-480)*

> *I thought it was good. It was OK., it was in a room, there's no distractions, and there's no table in front like this. (C07 918-919)*

In this study, the situational theme was the sixth most influential theme on the interviewers' perceptions. It is one of the external themes thought to have an influence on interviews (Latham and Millman, 2002). In the analysed interviews, the situational theme, like the cultural theme, had much more influence on candidates than on interviewers (12.87% versus 3.44%). In this instance, the interviewers had little awareness of the influence of the theme on the candidate.

5.1.7. The interview readiness theme

Interview readiness is comprised of the following factors:

    Factor 1: Interview efficacy (6, 60)

    Factor 2: Interview preparation (16, 27)

    Factor 3: Interview experience (19, 23)

Interview readiness encompasses the moderate factor of interview efficacy, of which interviewing confidence is a key feature (Saks, 2005). The two remaining factors are interview experience and interview preparation, which, although weak, significantly

influence interview efficacy. The key to interview readiness is confidence, which is derived from interview preparation (Saks, 2006) and the interviewer's behaviour.

> *Actually, like so so. I didn't prepare that much, so a bit stressed [R: a bit stress] for the interview. (C03 69-70)*

> *Being able to relate to the interviewer, and once you're comfortable, you can perform well in an interview. (C07 256-257)*

Interview preparation is greatly influenced by interview experience.

> *Just prepare well, prepare every questions, I went to several interviews, and I found the questions quite similar, and I just record down, paragraph by paragraph, just prepare well, (C10 368-369)*

Interviewers were not aware of the extent to which the candidates were being influenced by causes outside of themselves, and the interviewers were wrongly attributing their negative perceptions internally to the candidates. This was despite the interviewers' intent that the candidates should be relaxed in the interviews.

> *Get them to be relaxed certainly you know. I don't want it to be an overly formal process. I try and have them be themselves, feel more comfortable because they're going to do better at interviews. (ME 412-414)*

5.1.8. Sub-research question 6: The interviewing theme

Sub-research question 6:

> *Do interviewing factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?*

The interviewing theme is comprised of the following factors:

Factor 1: Interviewers' behaviour (3, 79)

Factor 2: Interviewers' question quality (13, 37)

Factor 3: Interviewers' panel (34, 2)

In this theme, the most prevalent factor influencing perceptions is the interviewer's behaviour, which is one of the top five strongest factors influencing interviews. Interviewers' question quality is a moderate factor and the interviewers' panel is a weak one. As in the case of the cultural theme, there was a great difference between the perceptions of the interviewers and candidates regarding the influence of the interviewing theme (2.17% versus 20.71%). Interviewers' attitude and behaviour influences candidates' confidence and perceptions of their extroversion.

> *I felt good and I thought I did well. I think the interviewers were very nice and they made me feel at home, I think. I think that, comfortable. Yes, I think that was the key because I think I warm up to people who are friendly and make you feel comfortable. (C07 96-98)*

> *... you don't normally perceive like a corporate as friendly and so maybe I did have a preconception (MC 790-791)*

Although this is a relatively insignificant theme for interviewers, it is important for candidates. For example, Neyer and Harzing (2008) found that time pressure increases the influence of culture in an intercultural interaction. Interview characteristics such as interview structure and interview format influence the interviewers' evaluations (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998). This theme includes the behaviour of the interviewers, which may also influence the interview (Latham and Millman, 2002). This study

showed that the candidates were much more influenced by this factor than the interviewers realised.

> *It was hard in a way that you know, she gave out a lot of questions and you*
> *know, we were running out of time. So many questions upfront. We were all you*
> *know all in a rush to go to another appointment. All that waiting time, all that*
> *team bonding.*
> *R*
> *It's draining.*
> *C04*
> *Yeah, it drained me a lot. (C04 501-507)*

5.1.9. Sub-research question 7: The demographics theme

Sub-research question 7:

> *Do demographics factors have a positive and significant relation to outcomes in*
> *the intercultural structured behavioural description interview?*

The demographics theme is comprised of three weak factors, as follows:

Factor 1: Age (25, 14)

Factor 2: Parenthood (35, 2)

Factor 3: Gender (37, 1)

The influence of the demographics theme was the weakest of all the themes. As in the case of the personality theme, both the interviewers and candidates were slightly influenced by it (1.12% versus 1.10%). In this regard, this study may be contradicting Goldberg (2003), who claims that race-similarity is more important than age similarity or sameness of sex in an employment interview.

5.2.   Key Research Question 2: The influence of culture

Key Research Questions 2:

How does culture influence intercultural selection interview outcomes?

Culture affects the validity of the employment interview (Hough and Oswald, 2000) and this can happen in many ways. First, culture affects interviewers' evaluations of candidates' culturally inappropriate behaviour (Molinsky, 2005). Culture triggers interviewers' stereotypes, causing them to be more inclined to see certain qualities in candidates.

> *Possibly. I guess if you're talking about cultural stereotyping, if I was to be very honest, I always think, I always, stereotype, I do that people from Asian background, say Chinese, Korean and from experience are extremely committed and hard-workers. So I may have already put that perception on about the candidate that she, from what she told me that I may have believed more because I have this. (MH 516-520)*

Second, culture influences interpretations in several ways.

> *Like for example, if the interviewer is Asian, and for some questions they will think is offended to us, but for people from western culture they were saying it's not a problem. (C03 720-721)*

> *The candidate requirement very different, like the kind of person they look for might be different. (C03 734-735)*

Third, culture impacts on how the candidates feel they should answer the interviewers' questions so as to create a positive perception.

... the culture here, exactly how to answer the question. (C02 696)

Unfortunately, culture is taken for granted (Knoblauch, 2001) and the significance of culture and its influence on candidates in an interview are largely overlooked by interviewers. From the above analysis and discussion, it can be seen that the influence of culture on interviews is pervasive across the other themes and factors that have been identified in this study as influencing interviewers' perceptions of the candidates.

The section above identified culture as a major theme in the interview. The process of culture's influence on interviewers' and candidates' perceptions can be explored by examining the influence of each of the cultural factors on the various other factors in the interview. In this study, an analysis of the influence of culture was performed as follows. A copy of the NVivo file was copied. All the coding references in the cultural theme were re-analysed for their influences on the other themes and factors. It was necessary to carry out this step in a separate NVivo file because it was expected that culture would impact on both internal and external causes. If the same file was used, coding culture to both internal and external causes would disrupt the analyses that examined causality on perceptions. Table 6a and Table 6b below respectively show the relative strengths of the influence of culture on each of the other themes and factors. Again, the number of coding references was used as an indication of strengths of influence. Note that the sum totals of each cultural factor in the two tables may not correspond, because a few coding references which were separated into different factors in Table 6b were coded as one coding reference in the Table 6a.

Table 6a: Influence of culture on themes

	accent	cross-cultural communication	cultural exposure	cultural savvy	cultural values and behaviours	English language	interviewers' cultural background	number of coding references
1. communication	1	0	7	32	14	26	8	88
2. KSA	2	13	0	22	17	3	0	57
3. professional assets	0	0	0	11	7	4	0	22
4. interviewing	2	0	1	5	6	4	0	18
5. personality	0	0	0	8	5	0	1	14
6. interview readiness	0	0	0	2	0	2	8	12
	5	13	8	80	49	39	17	

Table 6b: Influence of culture on factors

	accent	Cross-cultural communication	cultural exposure	cultural savvy	cultural values and behaviours	English language	interviewers' cultural background	number of coding references
1. verbal	0	0	1	22	8	11	1	43
2. customer service and sales	1	13	0	14	10	2	0	40
3. two-way interaction	1	0	6	7	2	11	7	34
4. career alignment	0	0	0	8	5	3	0	16
5. relationship with manager	0	0	0	7	7	0	0	14
6. work ethics	0	0	0	7	5	0	1	13
7. interviewers' question quality	0	0	1	5	6	0	0	12
8. interview efficacy	0	0	0	2	0	1	8	11
9. education	0	0	0	3	3	0	0	6
10. interviewers' behaviours	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	6
11. meaning of work	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	5
12. impressions	0	0	1	2	2	0	0	5
13. nonverbal	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	5
14. candidates' questions	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	3
15. coping with pressure	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
16. work experience	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
17. interview preparation	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1

18. relationship with peers	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
19. extroversion	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	5	13	9	84	52	39	17	

Culture influences all the five internal themes of communication, KSA, professional assets, personality and interview readiness. Because the interviewers' perceptions were internally attributed to these themes, culture had a significant influence on outcomes. To explore the influence of culture on perceptions of each theme, the factors that were being influenced by culture are presented in Table 6b. The following sections present the findings from the analyses of the influence of culture on each of the themes and their respective factors.

5.2.1. The influence of culture on communication

Perceptions of all the communication factors were influenced by culture. The communication factors that were strongly influenced by culture were the verbal factor (43) and two-way interaction (34). The remaining communication factors were much less influenced by culture, i.e., impressions (5), the nonverbal factor (5) and candidates' questions (3).

The verbal factor was influenced by cultural savvy (22) and English language proficiency (11) and to lesser degrees by cultural values and behaviour (8), cultural exposure (1) and the interviewers' cultural background (1).

I know the culture better, I can make a better say of myself. (C05 335-336)

So, he wasn't talking in his own language, not at all. He was talking in English, however, it was, I know that he kind of struggled to find the proper words. (MB 157-158)

Here, they want you to talk like this way. You can smile, you should smile in both cultures, but you won't talk like "I will smile" in China, it's kinda kind like kindergarten talk, it's kindergarten talk, it's not like mature. (C10 473-475)

I don't think she's been in Australia for five minutes. She's got a couple of Australian colloquialisms, and a couple of little phrases there, (MF 820-821)

I think if we come from the same cultural background and the example I use will be more acceptable for them, and they will have a stronger feeling in that example (C03 580-581)

Two-way interaction was influenced by English language proficiency (11), cultural savvy (7), interviewers' cultural background (7), cultural exposure (6), cultural values and behaviour (2) and accent (1).

I think it's just the communication, that's all it was. I don't think he was on the same level as we were on. (MB 679-680)

... once you get to know a bit about their culture, the interviewer's culture you think, OK. that's where they are from, I would actually may say things differently to fit that particular culture. (C01 877-879)

If Asia people, like Asia interviewer, or I think I would do better. Yeah I would feel more relaxed to talk with. (C08 760-761)

Yeah, I don't know when I learnt German, I wasn't very good at it, I would say something to my teacher, and she would say you're saying that all wrong but she still understood what I was saying, like the words sometimes in different places, but you can still get the gist of what you're saying (ML 489-492)

But if in China, it will be a lot different. Because the greeting will be routine as well. But they will ask more information. Maybe because here they more concern about the personal privacy so they won't ask, just greeting. But China, oh where are you from, where you live, something like that, your, is it far from our company, far from your place, is it easy to get here, something like that. (C08 388-392)

It is strong, as in when he's nervous, or when he's put in a situation where he's not comfortable, and it's if I can use the word thicker, so it's more pronounced. So there's times when we have trouble understanding him (MK 188-190)

Impressions were influenced by cultural savvy (2), cultural values and behaviour, (2) and cultural exposure (1).

I think other issues happen about China, that make their mind come up very clearly sometimes, like Tibet. Tibet issues, some like the human rights issues, something like the Chinese is not very open. This probably make me a ( ) and once they saw name, they come up with idea how you are looking. (C02 791-794)

I think she's been in Australia for a fair while. I don't think she's been in Australia for five minutes. She's got a couple of Australian colloquialisms, and a couple of little phrases there, I think they're there for sure. I think she's quite rounded in her views. Very open. (MF 819-821)

The nonverbal factor was influenced by English language proficiency (3), cultural savvy (1) and cultural values and behaviour (1).

I have to think about that in my own way of thinking, and then try to translate it to English and let him know. Maybe there is some delay in conversation and also maybe some misleading, but not too much. Because I am experience in talking as well, and maybe some delay. (C05 520-523)

Maybe there is some other way of culture but that not influence that interview very much. The way people greeting with each other like shake hands, or how they smile to people. Or they hand over stuffs to the other people with two hands, it's just a slight influence (C05 527-530)

Candidates' questions were influenced by cultural savvy (1), cultural values and behaviour (1), and English language proficiency (1).

... both countries won't ask like how much you pay me, but in here, you can always ask, can you see my opportunities, for example, can you see my opportunity like five years time, it's kind of clear objective, so Australian people says this question is OK., China is not good. They will that think you are not stable, you are not stable, you want, now you ( ) you should focus on what are you doing. (C10 1008-1013)

If English is their second language, they still might not know how to properly communicate. Although they have a question in mind they might not be able to think of the words to maybe ask that question, so either they don't take the opportunity or they ask something else but that's not what they wanted actually to ask. So maybe that sort of communication barrier there. Maybe because we have different perceptions of what we actually like. Maybe they might not ask me specific questions because they might think 'Oh she won't not understand, she's not Asian'. (MC 972-978)

5.2.2. The influence of culture on KSA

As in the case of the communication factors, all the perceptions of the KSA factors were influenced by culture. The KSA factor that was strongly influenced by culture was customer service and sales (40). The remaining factors were much less influenced by culture, i.e., relationship with managers (14), coping with pressure (2) and relationship with peers (1).

403

Customer service and sales was influenced by cultural savvy (14), cross-cultural communication (13), cultural values and behaviour (10), English language proficiency (2) and accent (1).

Yes, culture a bit different cause different background, and the service like the criteria for them to like, range the customer service, and the way we range the customer is a little bit different as well. (C06 578-579)

... leverage off Mandarin/Cantonese speaking was of great excitement to me. Because that was something I do find difficult, and whilst obviously he did have the Mandarin/ Cantonese and that would be of value to my business, (ME 130-133)

Yeah, its not, sometimes, it's about English, maybe I cannot distinguish every word she use, she mention, (C11 614-615)

To me, accent would be a concern for them. Because once you get accent, they would not feel like comfortable to talk with.
R
Yeah, yeah. The customers you mean will not be comfortable.
C08
Yeah (C08 716-721)

The relationship with managers factor was influenced by cultural savvy (7) and cultural values and behaviour (7).

... in Australia, I can get support from my manager, in China, it's hard.
R
How do you mean, how do you mean you can get support from the manager, how?
C10
From support from manager, like if the client is really difficult, you have to be calm down, you have to be calm down and smile, you have to keep your

*professional face, but if there is still like quite emotional, maybe you have to call
the customer service manager you can do that.*

R

So in Australia you can do that?

C10

*Yes, you can do that. In China, you may, you can still do that, but the way you
going to do it, you can't talk like that way because they say us we are you pass
the most difficult things to a manager, you avoid your whole responsibility. That
kind of thing you won't talk, so they will think, you pass every difficult task to
your manager, the purpose I hire you is because you can handle it. (C10
506-522)*

*No, if anything I suppose I would find the Asian cultures to be more respectful,
potentially.*

R

*And how does that impact on your experience? On how you experience that more
respectful.*

ME

*When I say more respectful I suppose more, sometimes more shy at the start of
an interview, would be one thing. They are always very polite too you know. And
I have instances when they won't call me P ((first name)), they would call me Mr
C ((surname)). And I know that could sometimes be an Asian influence as well.
I'd say 'Call me P, nah that's fine'. That's the only difference, I'd say just relax
like any other candidates I just want you to relax, take it easy, and we'll get you.
(ME 398-408)*

Managers from different cultures have different conflict management behaviors

(Doucet, et al., 2009). The relationship with managers factor was also

culturally-determined when there was conflict (Bierbrauer and Klinger, 2005).

*Potentially to challenge back the manager and saying he's being ridiculous
about $30 and the fact he had to go back and forth, back and forth and the
manager hasn't presented himself. So there's two things there, I would have said,
I would have dragged the manager back out to actually have a conversation as
he was making the decision (MJ 571-574)*

Coping with pressure was influenced by cultural savvy (1) and English language proficiency (1).

> *Yeah, yeah, it's along the same line ((reading)) sorry, I remember when he said that, cause he was talking about, say, if you get to Wednesday and you're way off meeting a target, what are you going to do to make sure that you meet your target by Friday, he is saying, the first thing I should do, is look see if it's me or there's not enough customers coming into the branch, and he's like because it might be raining, I just thought that was cute I suppose.*
> *R*
> *Not something you expect.*
> *ML*
> *Gave me the giggles.*
> *R*
> *It didn't put you off?*
> *ML*
> *No, not at all, not at all, it's not a bad thing.*
> *R*
> *Do you think it's a cultural thing?*
> *ML*
> *Yeah, yeah, I think so, like a little bit. It's just the way he said it I think (ML 230-250)*

The relationship with peers factor was influenced by accent (1).

> *To me, accent would be a concern for them. Because once you get accent, they would not feel like comfortable to talk with.*
> *R*
> *Yeah, yeah. The customers you mean will not be comfortable.*
> *C08*
> *Yeah and also the internal communication, the colleagues. (C08 716-721)*

5.2.3. The influence of culture on professional assets

All the perceptions of the professional assets factors were influenced by culture. The professional assets most influenced by culture were career alignment (16), followed by education (6), followed by meaning of work (5), followed finally by work experience (1).

Career alignment was influenced by cultural savvy (8), cultural values and behaviour (5), and English language proficiency (3).

> *I was unprepared in my first interview, one of my answers, I was born in China, I have been like, in King Garden in China High School, China, this kind of answers is not that interest interviewers want answers, they don't care where you from, they care where you from because we can speak Mandarin and the advantage that you got, they don't care where you did High School, like in King Garden, it doesn't matter, they care what are your skills, your education, you have passion, your kind of career. (C10 384-389)*

> *Let me think. And also the over qualified problem.*
> *R*
> *Is that a cultural problem?*
> *C08*
> *Yes, because in China they more like concern about your qualification rather than experience. And here they more like focus on the experience rather than the qualification. Many people say, oh you apply for the job as a teller in AFSO. That's what TAFE students will do, not your like your masters or bachelor. (C08 567-574)*

> *... couldn't believe that he was a sales person, like over the phone just surprises me so much, because but, when we interviewed him, he's got really poor communication skills, not only the language, (ML 634-636)*

Career goals need to be in line with the role being applied for, which presents a problem for Chinese candidates, since there are indications that Chinese culture dictates that interviewers consider a candidate's career path to be the interviewer's concern and not the candidate's. C10 describes the attitude of a Chinese manager as follows:

> *You don't need to think about futures, and if you are capable of doing what you do now, I will make decision to you, I will put you through to high position, but this kind of position is not your concern now, so please (C10 1017-1018)*

Interviewers have the perception that passion is related to culture in the case of Chinese candidates. As passion is a key feature of career alignment, culture influences the perception of career alignment by influencing the perception of passion.

> *I do, I believe that there's a part of him that you know I just think there's a part of him that's perceived in the Chinese culture that the bigger the company the better it is. Do you know what I mean? There is a part of that. And there's a part of me that C10 would have gone home that night and you know what he is really proud to work for the bank. (MK 875-879)*

Education is influenced by cultural savvy (3), and also by cultural values and behaviour (3).

> *Perhaps, I try not to judge a person's over qualification, cause everybody's situation is different. You know, things change as you grow older. You choose to do different things. (MH 80-81)*

> *Yes, because in China they more like concern about your qualification rather than experience. And here they more like focus on the experience rather than the qualification. (C08 571-572)*

The meaning of work factor is influenced by cultural savvy (3) and cultural values and behaviour (2).

> *It's hard to think that someone's dream would be to work in a bank, I don't know, I certainly didn't dream of working in a bank. But I believed that with him [R: Yeah] I do, I believe that there's a part of him that you know I just think there's a part of him that's perceived in the Chinese culture that the bigger the company the better it is. Do you know what I mean? There is a part of that. And there's a part of me that C10 would have gone home that night and you know what he is really proud to work for the bank. (MK 874-879)*

Work experience is influenced by English language proficiency (1).

> *Yeah, but this I can get little bits and pieces, you have to really concentrate, you know, trying to piece everything together its difficult, but he understood the question, he was telling us his work experience. (ML 656-658)*

5.2.4. The influence of culture on personality

Perceptions of both of the personality factors – work ethics and extroversion – were influenced by culture. Work ethics (13) was influenced by cultural savvy (7), cultural values and behaviour (5), and the interviewers' cultural background (1).

> *... people from Asian background, say Chinese, Korean and from experience are extremely committed and hard-workers. So I may have already put that perception on about the candidate that she, from what she told me that I may have believed more because I have this. (MH 517-520)*

> *I think that's a positive thing. I think that could be a positive thing, because people perceive that Chinese people are hardworking people, so that's a benefit for us, that could be one benefit for us. (C01 866-868)*

409

... more motivation, more serious, more serious with our work, more committed to our work, more focus, I think that shines more if the interviewer also acknowledges that. They're also an Asian interviewer, so that communicate that to them. (C01 1183-1185)

The perception of a strong work ethic in a candidate can raise the concern that the candidate may not be able to handle setbacks in the workplace.

Is that, if he doesn't perform, how personally he will take it? So, do you know what, I think that, that C10 and certainly the Chinese culture, if I can generalise like this, is certainly a culture that, has a background for performing. So they take a lot of pride in being very successful in what they do. And C10 I would hate to think of what would happen to C10 if C10 didn't perform? (MK 653-657)

Perceptions of extroversion are influenced by cultural savvy (1).

Like western people are more outgoing and want to, willing to express their feelings and perspective. They individualism. For Asian people, we compromise our feelings and perspectives and especially in group discussion, more senior people talk and the other people just follow, we keep our opinion inside. It's really hard to express our feelings. That's the culture thing. (C03 399-403)

Interviewers' preference for candidate's being upfront presented a possible cultural challenge for Chinese candidates, who externally attribute this lack of extroversion to culture. They have been taught to listen and respect the views and decisions of authorities and elders in their cultural communities. This characteristic was a disadvantage when dealing with an interviewer who assumed that it was an indication that the candidate would have difficulty with managing conflict.

5.2.5. The influence of culture on interview readiness

Of the three factors comprising interview readiness, the perception of interview efficacy (11) and interview preparation (1) were influenced by culture. Interview efficacy was influenced by the interviewers' cultural background (8), cultural savvy (2), and English language proficiency (1).

> *I think more confident, to be honest with you. More confidence …*
> *R*
> *More confidence with …?*
> *C01*
> *With the Asian interviewer.*
> *R*
> *You were more confident?*
> *C01*
> *I was more confident in the interview. (C01 1158-1166)*

> *A bit probably, yeah I need to like improve, it's like I need to get more knowledge about the culture in here, probably it's like ( ) so next time when I go for interview, like I can offer like, how to say that, yeah, probably more confident. (C06 604-606)*

> *That's the problem that I am not that confident, especially for local people interview overseas like candidates like me. In English level, we are not so as much fluent speaker as them. (C03 557-559)*

The interviewers' perceptions of interview preparation were influenced by candidate's lack of English language ability (1).

> *… yeah see like the first question off the bat, obviously, so asking if he has any question about the role itself, and he says, it's just personal, just face to face sale, like that doesn't make sense to me. (ML 636-638)*

411

5.2.6. The influence of culture on interviewing

Culture influences the external theme of interviewing because of its indirect influence on candidates' behaviour and performance in interviews. The perceptions of two of the three factors involved in interviewing that were influenced by culture were interviewers' question quality (12) and interviewers' behaviour (6). Interviewers' question quality was influenced by cultural values and behaviour (6), cultural savvy (5), and cultural exposure (1).

> *Yes, we call behaviour questions because it's kind of questions you answer like, it's kind of test, like you say, ( ) normal situation. In China, the questions like not that standard, if you get interviews, you can ask various questions. (C10 758-760)*

The perception of the quality of the interviewer's questions was influenced by the candidates' cultural background and their experiences with the different interview types.

> *Not very used to doing that, role-plays I must say, because not my education from High School like, never do role plays before, come to Australia, even in university, I would do role-play if the interviews you do it.*
> *R*
> *So how did that make you feel, were you comfortable?*
> *C10*
> *No, no, no, not very, not very comfortable, cause, in Australia if you study high school, you may play games with that but for us no [R: you don't] no. (C10 700-707)*

Culturally sensitive questions will take into account candidate's need for conflict avoidance.

412

Some of them, some of them I've prepared, but some of them are unexpected.
Such as, do you have a difficult person, how do you come along with difficult
person. I don't really know how to answer these questions. (C03 469-471)

In the interviews in this study, interviewers' behaviour was influenced by the

candidates' English language proficiency (4) and accent (2).

... with C03 as I said, I found because she did have a very strong accent, I don't
know if it was Chinese or what, Asian accent, but because she did, I found it
harder (MC 907-910)

5.3. Key Research Question 3: A culture-based attribution theory of the intercultural interview

Key Research Question 3:

What is the influence of attributions on perceptions of interviewers and

candidates during an intercultural selection interview?

Table 6a and Table 6b show that culture influenced the perception of all these internal

themes: communication, KSA, professional assets, personality and interview

readiness.

I know the culture better, I can make a better say of myself. (C05 335-336)

I don't know, he asked me to describe outstanding whatever, like customer, like
that one, that's why for me it's a bit hard, I was thinking, it was all quite good,
but he was asking me to like describe one outstanding one.
R
So what he considers good you may think differently.

413

C06

Yeah, for me it's normal, for him it's good. For him is good, for me is normal (C06 584-590)

Yes, because in China they more like concern about your qualification rather than experience. And here they more like focus on the experience rather than the qualification. (C08 571-572)

I think that could be a positive thing, because people perceive that Chinese people are hardworking people, so that's a benefit for us, that could be one benefit for us. (C01 866-868)

A bit probably, yeah I need to like improve, it's like I need to get more knowledge about the culture in here, probably it's like ( ) so next time when I go for interview, like I can offer like, how to say that, yeah, probably more confident. (C06 604-606)

The strongest cultural influence was on communication and KSA. Culture appears to have a relatively small influence on professional assets, personality and interview readiness. Culture also has only a small influence on the external theme of interviewing.

Yes, we call behaviour questions because it's kind of questions you answer like, it's kind of test, like you say, ( ) normal situation. In China, the questions like not that standard, if you get interviews, you can ask various questions. (C10 758-760)

As can be seen from Table 6b, the cultural factors that had the strongest influence on perceptions in the interviews were cultural savvy, cultural values and behaviour, and English language proficiency.

Like the Asian culture may be about, maybe working very hard. So you can present the idea that you work very hard. You're willing to take your whole time into that particular role. That may tell the interviewer that is the sort of candidate that is right. If it's of similar culture, then you may sense the behaviour already. (C01 724-728)

... for different people from different cultures, there will be some difference in the way they express themselves in an interview ... (C10 474-475)

Language is culture. He speaks English as a first language and I speak English as a second language. So whenever he talks he can talk very fluently and he can cut to the chase, and ask the questions. And when it comes to me, I have to think about that in my own way of thinking, and then try to translate it to English and let him know. Maybe there is some delay in conversation and also maybe some misleading, but not too much. (C09 517-522)

The remaining cultural factors had a small influence on perceptions. These were the interviewers' cultural background, cross-cultural communication, cultural exposure and accent.

If Asia people, like Asia interviewer, or I think I would do better. Yeah I would feel more relaxed to talk with. (C08 760-761)

Of particular interest to me and my business was his language skills. I always find it difficult to recruit Mandarin/ Cantonese speaking candidates. So I was particularly excited about that prospect. (ME 91-93)

I think she's been in Australia for a fair while. I don't think she's been in Australia for five minutes. She's got a couple of Australian colloquialisms, and a couple of little phrases there, I think they're there for sure. I think she's quite rounded in her views. Very open. (MF 819-822)

... with C03 as I said, I found because she did have a very strong accent, I don't know if it was Chinese or what, Asian accent, but because she did, I found it harder to communicate with her, because as I said, I felt like I had to keep probing, so that obviously did impact (MC 907-910)

The pervasive influence of culture in the selection interviews was evident in two ways: (1) there was a tendency for the Chinese candidates to attribute more perceptions to external factors than to internal factors; and (2) the actual causes of positive and negative perceptions of non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates differed. A culture-based attribution model of the intercultural interview was therefore confirmed. Culture is an external factor that can influence employment interviews (Latham and Millman, 2002). The significance of culture is that it affects the validity of an employment interview (Hough and Oswald, 2000).

5.4. Key Research Question 4: The behavioural interview component of an intercultural selection interview

Key Research Question 4:

Is the structured behavioural description interview a suitable mode of selection when Chinese candidates are involved?

This thesis shows that interviewers and candidates understand the purpose of a selection interview.

In summary, I think the main purpose or the main objective would be to make sure the person, the candidate is going to fulfil the job properly and is culturally the right fit. That's the nutshell. (MC 449-451)

Like whether I have the skills and knowledge they require. Like communication and teamwork skills, and whether I can talk confidently with customer, and understand their enquiries and, know their products, and service the bank (C03 295-297)

And personal attributes, whether it's a cultural match for AFSO. (C03 304)

Achieving success in an interview requires that candidates have the 'wow' factor.

... you're going to remember it if this has a wow factor in it. Did this have the wow factor for me? Nope. (MF 668-669)

It was just great to have her say it and you just go wow, it's just something that she would do, it's like second nature to her so that did stood out. (MG 541-542)

To generate the 'wow' effect, candidates need to utilise the technical components of the behavioural interview as well as act in a culturally appropriate way.

Like anyone can say that, but to show that you actually do it well, that's when you actually go into the detail of it, and he he doesn't provide any example, he provides example it's not really related. (ML 766-768)

Interviewers expected the candidates to be properly engaged when involved in a behavioural interview.

During the interview I would expect the candidate would obviously respond to the questions, in the manner that we set out to start which is a behavioural based. So what we are looking for is what the candidate has done previously, how they do it, what the outcome was. (ME 171-174)

417

... the type of ur interview we're going to do today is what we call a behavioural-based interview [C05: yeah]. So we're going to ask you some, some questions. What we'll be looking for in your response, so it's particularly um what you did in the situation [C05: cool, cool], how you did it, and what the outcome was [C05: yeah] OK.? So ur for example like one of the questions may be, you know, can you give us a time that you have given great customer service? [C05: OK.]. So rather than being very general and saying, you know I give great customer service to all my customers, I'm looking for specifics [C05: OK.]. Say if you can recall back to a specific customer or like that type of thing and tell us the whole situation [C05: sure, sure] OK.? (S05 12-20)

The significance of a behavioural interview is the confidence that it gives to interviewers in regard to the 'truth' of the candidates' responses. The quality of candidates' behavioural responses determines the level of trust candidates generate in interviewers.

So then you can see whether they do have examples or it's not, I guess, you don't, not sort of just catching them out but just to back up what they are trying to say as well, and probing. Probing is a good thing. So if they answer a question, I think it's a great answer asking more details to see whether it's just a rehearsed kind of answer or if it's genuine. (MG 322-326)

In the analysed interviews, the candidates not only underestimated the influence of the behavioural interviews on interviewers' perceptions, but also found these interviews challenging.

... the hard thing is sometimes when it comes to some behavioural questions or questions relating to my past experience, it makes me to think and that was hard questions. (C05 360-361)

They often attributed the challenging nature of the interviews to their lack of interview experience, as well as to the experience of the behavioural interview itself.

I got many failures, I got failures, I learn from my failures (C10 995)

Yes, we call behaviour questions because it's kind of questions you answer like, it's kind of test, like you say, ( ) normal situation. In China, the questions like not that standard, if you get interviews, you can ask various questions. (C10 758-760)

C10 saw the behavioural interview as a form of cheating at an interview.

... every Australian company asks same behaviour questions, (C10 779)

if they make same questions, the candidates can communicate with each other, they will sit together, like the poker machine style, we sit together, we like negotiate each other, we prepare the answers, make it all good, it's kind of, it's kind of cheating, (C10 779-782)

This suggests that the behavioural interview may not as robust as many researchers claim. Extensive interview experience, preparation and practise are sufficient to ensure that the candidates can beat the interviewers at their game.

Like I've heard that people can be trained for the interviews; and yeah sometimes it's not, they're not as good as you expect them to be. (MA 409-410)

5.5. The emerging outcomes model

This PhD study shows that communication emerges as a significant influence in interviews – one that influences interview outcomes (Kacmar and Hochwarter, 1995; Young and Kacmar, 1998). While Young and Kacmar (1998) have shown that verbal communication influences interviewers' perceptions of candidates' personalities and

KSA, this study shows that communication also influences interviewers' perceptions of candidates' professional assets. These various perceptions are among the variables that have an ultimate bearing on interview outcomes. A second group of variables, the influence of which is brought out by this study, are the external themes of culture, interviewing factors, situational factors, interview readiness and demographics factors. This study's analysis shows that while interviewers attribute many perceptions of candidates, particularly negative perceptions, to the candidates' internal characteristics, the candidates attribute many perceptions about themselves, particularly negative ones, to external causes. Attributions appear to be a strong mediating influence on the selection interview outcomes. The model that emanates from this analysis and reflects these findings is shown in Figure 14 below.

Figure 14: Emerging outcomes model
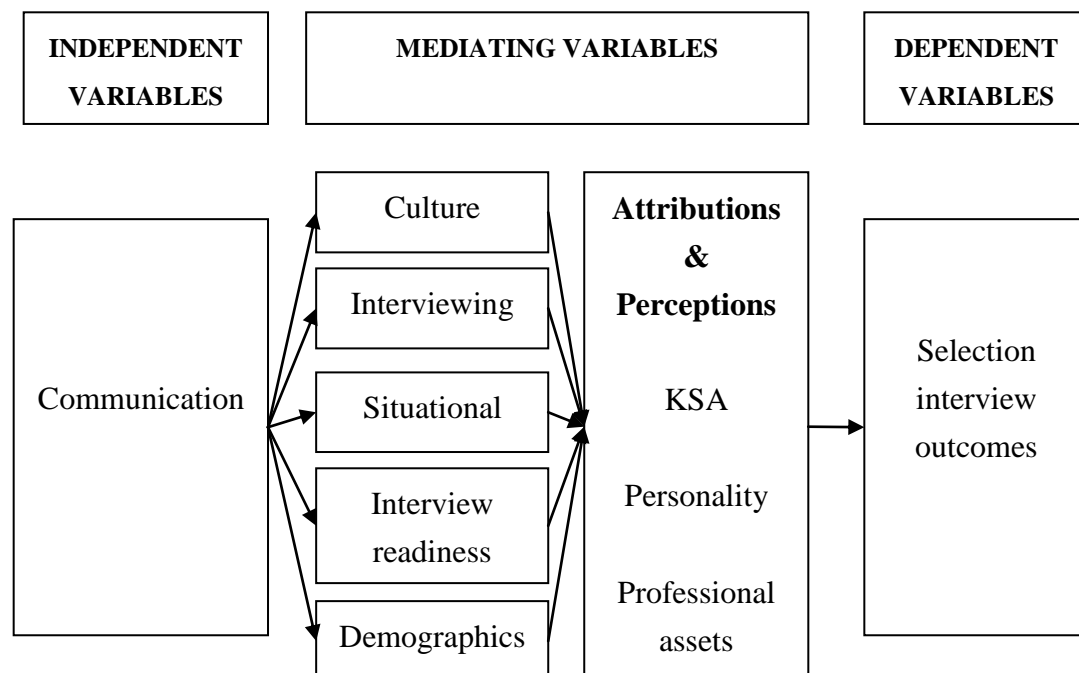
Communication is a critical theme determining perceptions of candidates person-job fit (through KSA evaluation), person-organisation fit (through personality evaluation), and person-career fit (through professional assets evaluation). These perceptions of fit are influenced by external cultural, interviewing, situational, interview readiness and demographics themes, as well as the phenomenon of attribution in intercultural selection interviews. The perceptions, in turn, are influences impacting on selection interview outcomes in the form of the interviewers' hiring decisions. The phenomenon of attribution in intercultural interviews is important because culture is an external factor influencing the perception of candidate fit. Culture-based factors cause non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates to view their strengths and weaknesses in different ways, i.e., what is considered a strength to the Chinese may be considered a weakness to the non-Chinese. Culture also predisposes non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates to attribute perceptions in different ways, i.e., the non-Chinese interviewers tend to attribute a candidate's behaviour to an internal factor, while the candidates tend to attribute the same behaviour to an external factor. To the extent that culture-based attributions are influencing perceptions of candidates' strengths and weaknesses, these perceptions must be re-evaluated to more accurately reflect the true strengths and weaknesses of the candidates. Failure to do so results in unfair employment and discrimination.

The contributions of this thesis to the literature can be seen by comparing the proposed conceptual framework (Figure 4, p.130) with the emerging outcomes model (Figure 14, p.418). First, communication is an important variable influencing selection interview outcomes; however this importance is lost when communication is hidden away as part of the competency factors in the conceptual model. The emerging model gives appropriate regard to the critical role that communication plays in the selection

421

interview. Second, KSA which makes up a large part of the competency factors, play a mediating role in the new model and not a direct role as suggested in the conceptual model. Third, personality, situational and demographics factors do not directly influence selection interview outcomes as suggested by the conceptual framework. Instead, according to the emerging outcomes model, these factors in addition to culture, the interviewing factors, interview readiness, and professional assets, mediate interview outcomes. Fourth, perceptions, not biases, play an important mediating role in outcomes.

To sum up, this thesis has found that culture mediates the outcomes of structured behavioural selection interviews in intercultural selections. A key research finding has been that the influence of culture is often overlooked by non-Chinese interviewers intent on seeking job and organisation fits. Chinese candidates, on the other hand, are very aware of the influence of culture, subtly becoming conscious of differences in expectations between the interviewers and themselves. This thesis has shown that culture, embedded in communication, influences selection interview outcomes, and that these influences are strongly manifested in the case of the verbal and two-way interaction factors in communication. In addition, culture has a strong mediating influence on outcomes via the perceptions of interviewers, which distort their attributions of the following factors: KSA, professional assets, personality, interview readiness, and interviewing.

Another key research finding of this study has been the prevalence of the phenomenon of attribution in interviews, something which has not been examined before. The perceptions of non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates are influenced by the same themes, but the degrees of influence are different. Interviewers are influenced

largely by internal themes while candidates are significantly influenced by external themes. Interviewers are most influenced by the internal themes of communication, professional assets and KSA. Candidates are most influenced by the external themes of culture and interviewing and the internal theme of interview readiness. The pervasive influence of culture in the selection interview is therefore evident in two ways. First, there is a tendency for the Chinese candidates to attribute more perceptions to external factors than to internal factors. Second, the actual causes of the positive and negative perceptions of non-Chinese interviewers and Chinese candidates differ.

The final key research finding of this thesis is that the structured behavioural interview may not be a suitable tool for intercultural selection. Because of the direct and indirect influence of culture, structured behavioural selection interviews may not be as robust as many researchers claim. They are susceptible to cultural influences and may need to be modified accordingly for the purposes of intercultural selection. Extensive experience, preparation and practise are required to ensure that candidates can beat the interviewers at their game. In particular, candidates must be skilled in the behavioural interview, and pay attention to the importance of career fit as a selection criterion, according it at least equal importance to job and organisation fit.

5.6. Implications for practitioners

The literature lacks studies that focus on actual communication practices in intercultural communication as a form of social interaction (Carbaugh, 2007), particularly concerning the question of how participants of different cultures perceive and attribute a candidates' performance in a selection interview. There are differences in the attributions made by the interviewers and candidates in these interviews.

Reconciling the differences would help bridge the gap between the interviewers and candidates. This would require that the interviewers and candidates were aware of the different causes of their perceptions in interviews.

The literature has identified many factors that are influencing interviewers' perceptions of candidates in interviews. The literature, however, does not identify and separate the factors and their characteristics into those that have a greater tendency to positively influence the interviewer from those that tend to negatively influence the interviewer. Furthermore, the factors that are influencing the candidates' positively and negatively have not been identified. Most of the factors being studied are internal and focused on the candidates' personalities and skill fits. There is a relative lack of studies of external factors, which largely remain to be investigated. Moreover, the degree to which attributions occur in intercultural interviews has not been explored in the literature. To further the aim of identifying the factors influencing positive and negative perceptions, the next section reports on how the interviewer and candidate differ in the attribution of the perceptions.

5.6.1. Differences in interviewers' and candidates' perceptions

Table 7 below lists the 37 factors across nine themes according to the strengths of their influence on perceptions of the interviewers and candidates. The strengths are indicated by the number of coding references. The last column in the table shows the difference in strength of the influence of each factor on interviewers and candidates. Positive differences indicate that the interviewers are more influenced than the candidates, and the negative differences indicate that the candidates are more influenced than the interviewers. For example, there is a substantial difference of 88

coding references in the way the verbal factor has influenced the interviewers and

candidates, with the interviewers being more influenced than the candidates. On the

other hand, the interviewers and candidates are also very differently influenced by the

interviewers' behaviour, by 59 coding references, but here the difference is expressed

as minus 59, indicating that the candidates are more influenced than the interviewers.

For the purpose of this discussion, the relative differences between the interviewers

and candidates will be interpreted as follows:

1. Substantially different: differences of 50 coding references or more.

2. Very different: differences of between 30 and 49.

3. Different: differences of between 10 and 29.

4. Similar: factor differences of less than 10.

Table 7: Factors influencing interviewers and candidates

FACTORS	INTERVIEWERS	CANDIDATES	differences
CRITICAL FACTOR			
01. verbal	123	35	88
STRONG FACTORS			
02. cultural savvy	32	53	-21
03. interviewers' behaviours	10	69	-59
04. career alignment	59	15	44
05. English language	46	24	22
MODERATE FACTORS			
06. interview efficacy	24	36	-12
07. customer service and sales	48	4	44
08. work experience	28	20	8
09. impressions	45	0	45
10 : nonverbal	40	5	35
11 : two-way interaction	36	7	29

12. meaning of work	29	12	17
13. interviewers' question quality	4	33	-29
WEAK FACTORS			
14. work ethics	26	2	24
15. pre-interview conditions	2	26	-24
16. interview preparation	7	20	-13
17. physical environment	1	26	-25
18. candidates' questions	25	0	25
19. interview experience	4	19	-15
20. accent	19	1	18
21. interviewers' cultural background	1	18	-17
22. extroversion	15	2	13
23. education	8	6	2
24. candidate pool	10	4	6
25. age	9	5	4
26. cross-cultural communication	10	4	6
27. hours and locations	4	8	-4
28. job type and complexity	6	2	4
29. cultural exposure	4	4	0
30. relationship with peers	7	0	7
31. coping with pressure	4	0	4
32. atmosphere	0	4	-4
33. relationship with manager	3	0	3
34. interviewers' panel	0	2	-2
35. parenthood	2	0	2
36. luck	0	1	-1
37. gender	1	0	1

The two factors that are substantially different between the interviewers and

candidates are the verbal factor (88) and interviewers' behaviours (-59), both of which

are among the top five strongest themes influencing perceptions of candidates in the

interviews. While the interviewers are greatly influenced by the internal theme, the

verbal factor, the candidates are greatly influenced by the external theme of

interviewers' behaviour.

The four factors, career alignment (44), customer service and sales (44), impressions (45), and the nonverbal factor (35), are very different in their influence on the interviewers and candidates. While career alignment is a strong factor, the other three are moderate factors, and all are internal causes. All the factors have more influence on the interviewers than on the candidates.

The moderate factors that are different in their influence on the interviewers and candidates are two-way interaction (29), interviewers' question quality (-29), meaning of work (17), and interview efficacy (-12). Two-way interaction and meaning of work are more influential on the interviewers than on the candidates, and vice-versa for interviewers' question quality and interview efficacy. The influence of work experience (8) on the interviewers' and the candidates' perceptions are similar. There are nine weak factors that impact differently on the interviewers and candidates. These are physical environment (-25), candidates' questions (25), work ethics (24), pre-interview conditions (-24), accent (18), interviewers' cultural background (-17), interview experience (-15), interview preparation (-13) and extroversion (13). The interviewers are more influenced by the candidates' questions, work ethics, accent and extroversion than the candidates are. The candidates are more influenced by the physical environment, pre-interview conditions, interviewers' cultural background, interview experience and interview preparation than the interviewers are. The remaining weak factors have a similar strength of influence on the interviewers and candidates.

This analysis highlights the fact that there are many factors which it is practically important for candidates to be more aware of in interviews than they currently are. These are, in order of their importance measured both according to (1) the strength of

the factor and (2) the degree of difference between the interviewers and candidates, as follows:

1. verbal (critical, 88)

2. career alignment (strong, 44)

3. customer service and sales (moderate, 44)

4. impressions (moderate, 45)

5. nonverbal (moderate, 35)

6. two-way interaction (moderate, 29)

7. meaning of work (moderate, 17)

8. candidates' questions (weak, 25)

9. work ethics (weak, 24)

10. accent (weak, 18)

11. extroversion (weak, 13)

The analysis also highlights the fact that there are many factors which it is practically important for interviewers to be more aware of in interviews. These are, in order of their importance measured according to (1) the strength of the factor and (2) the degree of difference between the interviewers and candidates, as follows:

1. interviewers' behaviours (strong, -59)

2. interviewers' question quality (moderate, -29)

3. interview efficacy (moderate, -12)

4. physical environment (weak, -25)

5. pre-interview conditions (weak, -24)

6. interviewers' cultural background (weak, -17)

7. interview experience (weak, -15)

8. interview preparation (weak, -13)

Cultural knowledge is important, but it is impossible to be fully conversant with the many different cultures that exist in today's workplace (Krizmanic, 1990). The pragmatic contribution of this research is to assist the interviewers and candidates in the Australian workplace to interview better. The above factors, as opposed to themes, make it possible to understand the specifics of the cultural differences between the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates in the research sample.

5.6.2. Differences in interviewers' and candidates' attributions

Intercultural encounters are fertile grounds for justifying negative perceptions and refusals in the intercultural selection interview (Otlowski, 2008). Interviewers and candidates must make proper attributions of their perceptions if they are to take realistic responsibility for their decisions and performance in these interviews. Communication, KSA, professional assets, personality and interview readiness are internal causal themes, and culture, interviewing, and situational and demographics factors are external themes. The discussion in Section 4.4 highlighted the substantial differences in how the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates attributed their positive and negative perceptions. Table 8a, Table 8b, Table 8c and Table 8d show the differences, by coding references, between the interviewers' and the candidates' positive and negative perceptions in relation to the various themes.

As with Section 5.6.1 above, the relative differences between the interviewers and candidates in the discussions below are interpreted as follows:

1. Substantially different: differences of 50 coding references or more

2. Very different: differences of between 30 and 49

3. Different: differences of between 10 and 29

4. Similar: differences of less than 10.

Table 8a: Differences in internally-attributed positive perceptions

	interviewers, positive, internal	candidates, positive, internal	differences
verbal	58	20	38
impressions	35	0	35
customer service and sales	26	0	26
nonverbal	25	3	22
candidates' questions	20	0	20
two-way interaction	23	5	18
career alignment	24	9	15
work ethics	17	2	15
meaning of work	21	8	13
work experience	14	6	8
extroversion	9	2	7
education	5	3	2
relationship with peers	2	0	2
relationship with manager	2	0	2
interview preparation	6	6	0
coping with pressure	0	0	0
interview efficacy	16	29	-13
interview experience	3	13	-10

As regards internally-attributed positive perceptions, the interviewers are much more susceptible to the verbal factor (38) and impressions (35) than the candidates. They also differ in regard to customer service and sales (26), the nonverbal factor (22), candidates' questions (20), two-way interaction (18), career alignment (15), work ethics (15) and meaning of work (13). The candidates, on the other hand, are more

susceptible to interview efficacy (-13) and interview experience (-10) than the interviewers.

Table 8b: Differences in internally-attributed negative perceptions

	interviewers, negative, internal	candidates, negative, internal	differences
verbal	66	15	51
career alignment	35	6	29
customer service and sales	23	4	19
nonverbal	15	2	13
two-way interaction	12	2	10
impressions	9	0	9
work ethics	9	0	9
extroversion	6	0	6
candidates' questions	5	0	5
relationship with peers	5	0	5
coping with pressure	4	0	4
meaning of work	8	4	4
interview efficacy	8	7	1
work experience	15	14	1
relationship with manager	1	0	1
education	3	3	0
interview preparation	1	13	-12
interview experience	1	6	-5

In terms of internally-attributed negative perceptions, the interviewers are significantly more influenced by the verbal factor (51) than the candidates. There are also differences regarding career alignment (29), customer service and sale (19), nonverbal (13), and two–way interaction (10). The candidates' perceptions, on the other hand, are more influenced by interview preparation (-12).

Table 8c: Differences in externally-attributed positive perceptions

	interviewers, positive, external	candidates, positive, external	differences
cultural savvy	30	6	24
accent	14	0	14
English language	10	0	10
cross-cultural communication	10	3	7
age	4	1	3
parenthood	2	0	2
candidate pool	1	0	1
gender	1	0	1
interviewers' behaviours	1	42	-41
interviewers' question quality	1	17	-16
physical environment	1	8	-7
pre-interview conditions	1	4	-3
atmosphere	0	3	-3
interviewers' cultural background	0	0	0
hours and locations	0	0	0
job type and complexity	0	0	0
cultural exposure	3	3	0
interviewers' panel	0	0	0
luck	0	0	0

Regarding externally-attributed positive perceptions, cultural savvy (24), English language proficiency (14) and accent (10) are among the differences in perceptions between the interviewers and candidates. On the other hand, interviewers' behaviour (41) makes a very big difference to the candidates' perceptions, and interviewers' question quality makes some difference (16).

Table 8d: Differences in externally-attributed negative perceptions

	interviewers, negative, external	candidates, negative, external	differences
cultural savvy	2	47	-45
pre-interview conditions	1	22	-21
interviewers' behaviours	9	27	-18
physical environment	0	18	-18
interviewers' cultural background	1	18	-17
interviewers' question quality	3	16	-13
hours and locations	4	8	-4
interviewers' panel	0	2	-2
cross-cultural communication	0	1	-1
atmosphere	0	1	-1
luck	0	1	-1
cultural exposure	1	1	0
parenthood	0	0	0
gender	0	0	0
English language	36	24	12
candidate pool	9	4	5
accent	5	1	4
job type and complexity	6	2	4
age	5	4	1

In terms of externally-attributed negative perceptions, the candidates were very susceptible to cultural savvy (45). Pre-interview conditions (21), interviewers' behaviour (18), physical environment (18), interviewers' cultural background (17), and interviewers' question quality (13) also showed differences.

The analyses above show that while interviewers' internally-attributed positive perceptions are more influenced by the verbal factor, impressions, customer service and sales, the nonverbal factor, candidates' questions, two-way interaction, career

alignment, work ethics and meaning of work, candidates' perceptions are more influenced by interview efficacy and interview experience. In regard to internally-attributed negative perceptions, the interviewers are more influence by the verbal factor, career-alignment, customer service and sales, the nonverbal factor and two-way interaction, and the candidates are more influenced by interview preparation. The interviewers make many more internal attributions of both positive and negative perceptions than the candidates do, thereby revealing the importance of the cultural value of individualism of the non-Chinese interviewers.

The interviewers' externally-attributed positive perceptions are more influenced by cultural savvy, English language and accent; the candidates' perceptions are more influenced by interviewers' behaviour and interviewers' question quality. For externally-attributed negative perceptions, the interviewers are more influenced by culturally savvy, pre-interview conditions, interviewers' behaviour, physical environment, interviewers' cultural background, and interviewers' question quality; the candidates perceptions are more influenced by English language proficiency. Unlike the observations made above regarding the internal attributions of perceptions by the interviewers and candidates, the candidates make more external attributions of their perceptions than the interviewers do. This is the case for both the positive and negative perceptions, although the candidates make more externally-attributed negative perceptions than positive ones, thereby reflecting the Chinese candidates' cultural value of collectivism.

The implication of the analyses in this section is that perceptions of how the interviewers and candidates are influenced by different factors may be very important, however, the interviewers and candidates must also be aware of the different ways in

which they attribute these various factors. Failures to address these differences can result in the interviewers acting in ways that may be construed as discriminatory, and in the candidates failing to act in ways that will impress the interviewers.

5.6.3. Importance of weak themes and factors

There are two reasons why weak themes and factors are important. First, weak themes and factors can be decisive influences in hiring decisions. Table 6 shows that the interviewers' perceptions are influenced by the main themes of communication, professional assets, KSA and culture. Surprisingly, personality, together with the situational factor, interview readiness, interviewing and demographics themes, are relatively weak influences. Yet, these weak themes are decisive influences in hiring decisions.

> C04 I thought, I liked C04. I thought he was pretty outgoing. That's the kind of personality we needed for the role. (MC 109-110)

> ... as soon as he said in this part here that he couldn't work Monday to Friday and he find out that area wasn't a part time role, I think that's what swayed our decision because we had to have someone full time. (MA 57-60)

> ... she's obviously done some research about what AFSO is about, which is which is positive (MI 518)

> I couldn't control that interview and they were my exact words when I walked out, I couldn't control the interview, I didn't want to speak over him so we let him talk, we weren't going to stop him and say OK. that's enough talking we just went oh OK. that's where it went wrong I think. (MB 315-319)

> Yep, yep, I'm looking for certain demographics for my business, that he fits, he, I have existing problems with some of my staff around ages (MK 96-97)

435

Table 1 shows the various weak factors influencing an interview. Some examples of weak factors that can be decisive in hiring decisions are accent, education, and cross-cultural communication.

> *... with C03 as I said, I found because she did have a very strong accent, I don't know if it was Chinese or what, Asian accent, but because she did, I found it harder to communicate with her, because as I said, I felt like I had to keep probing, so that obviously did impact (MC 907-910)*

> *... a little bit over over-qualified for the customer service representative position (ML 191-192)*

> *Of particular interest to me and my business was his language skills. I always find it difficult to recruit Mandarin/ Cantonese speaking candidates. So I was particularly excited about that prospect. (ME 90-92)*

Another reason for the importance of weak factors is the different influences that these factors have on the interviewers and candidates. Table 7 shows that these factors are work ethics, pre-interview conditions, interview preparation, physical environment, candidates' questions, interview experience, accent, interviewers' cultural background and extroversion. The factors that have more influence on the interviewers than on the candidates are work ethics, candidates' questions, accent and extroversion. The remaining factors exert more influence on the candidates than on the interviewers.

The significance of the above analyses is that most of the weak factors which are more influential on the interviewers are internal factors, and most of the weak factors which are more influential on the candidates are external factors. This means that the interviewers underestimate the influence of external factors on the candidates, and are

therefore indirectly basing some of their hiring decisions on external factors. This may explain why interviewers' decisions may be fair in outcome but discriminatory with regard to the process, resulting in charges of discrimination being brought against them. The implication of the analyses here is that the interviewers must be cautious of the influence of weak factors when making hiring decisions. For the candidates, the importance of interview experience simply cannot be underestimated.

Probably it's still depend on the experience, the language you talking, probably get more working real life experience, will provide me more, like if you can handle all different situations, that's only thing I have lack of, my experience about the interview, if I can get more working experience, probably I get provide more opinion to the interviewer. (C06 820-823)

The only successful candidate in the research sample had this to say about the critical importance of having sufficient interview experience.

I feel that in ANZ, in HSBC, sometimes, the first time, second time, I ask them I will be failed, because I know I'm not perfect candidate, but I'm still want to attend, from attending, you can learn things. Sometimes you know you will be fail, like you can ask the interviewer, like what is the perfect answer for the questions, (C10 209-212)

5.7. Implications for organisation policy

Two issues arising from this research have important implications for organisation policy. The first is the revelation of the importance of career fit, which goes above and beyond person-job fit and person-organisation fit in selection decisions. The second is the influence of culture on the behavioural interview that has implications for the training of interviewers and the interview panel.

5.7.1. Career fit

The purpose of an interview is to evaluate the person-job fit between the candidate and the job, and the person-organisation fit between the candidate and the organisation.

> *... my job or the role is to interview the interviewee to make sure that they do have the right skill set and they're capable to fulfil the role and also for them to interview me, to probe on whether or not this is going to be the right cultural fit, or whether or not they want to do the role, or whether or not the company suits their type. (MC 416-420)*

This evaluation influences the interview outcome.

> *I would have expected the outcome to be a decision as to whether she was suitable for the role or not, her experience was relevant, if she had a passion for customer service, and it was something that she really wanted to do and, a fit with a particular team that you know, find her getting satisfaction from the position also. (MH 100-103)*

The thesis reveals that the responsibility for assessing the various fits belongs to both the interviewers and candidates.

> *... the role is to interview the interviewee to make sure that they do have the right skill set and they're capable to fulfil the role and also for them to interview me, to probe on whether or not this is going to be the right cultural fit, or whether or not they want to do the role, or whether or not the company suits their type. (MC 416-420)*

> *The outcome I would say is probably a decision on whether it's the best, whether it was a good idea for me to go ahead with the job. Just because I went to the*

438

interview doesn't mean that I have to accept it. While I'm there, I'm actually analysing whether it's a good idea for me to continue in that role. (C01 185-191)

However, the thesis has also highlighted that the interviewers not only evaluate person-job fit and person-organisation in the interviews. A third fit, namely, person-career fit, is a critical component of the interviewers' hiring decisions.

We're not going to just give the job to someone just because they are fitting right. We also have to take into account where they want to go. (MC 525-527)

Many of the candidates in the sample overlooked the significance of career fit. The increasing importance of career fit is highlighted by the successful candidate, C10.

They expect you is, your clear mind, what is your opportunity in the future, what you want to do in five years' time? (C10 214-216)

Hiring decisions are based on explicit and implicit criteria, and these criteria are better understood by candidates in intracultural interviews (Peppas, Peppas and Jiin, 1999). When interviewers and candidates are not from the same culture, however, implicit criteria, in particular, may not be understood. This thesis has shown that career alignment is one such criterion. The interview is a two-way interaction event (Macan, 2009) and organisations should explicitly communicate their selection criteria to candidates.

5.7.2. Use of the structured behavioural selection interview

The influence of culture we have discussed very likely calls into question the fairness and equitability of the structured behavioural interview when candidates are from

non-western cultures, and this has implications for an organisation's policy. National differences exist in selection practices and the standardisation of such practices should be discouraged (Ryan, McFarland, Baron and Page, 1999). The widespread belief that the behavioural interview, which has been developed and tested in the west, is valid and fair and should be the standard selection method across all nations and cultures, should be treated with caution. This study has identified the presence of specific themes that characterise cultural differences in behavioural interviews. Non-Chinese interviewers and their organisations should evaluate the influence of these themes on interviewers' perceptions when interviewing Chinese candidates.

The tendency to subscribe to the structured interview can probably be attributed to its perceived ability to lower group differences (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998). However, the structured interview is anchored in behavioural indicators and selection criteria that are contingent on culture. Trying to eliminate group differences in this way merely reinforces the cultural biases inherent in these behavioural indicators and selection criteria.

5.7.3. Interviewers' training

Australian interviewers are being extensively trained in how to select graduates (Carless, 2007). This study shows that there is a need for this initiative to include training in cultural sensitivity in interviews. Training influences interviewers' perceptions of their own skills but has little impact on how candidates perceive interviewers (Connerley, 1997). This is not surprising, as the structured behavioural interview continues to dominate the training agenda. This study has highlighted the

themes that are important for candidates, and these themes should be incorporated into interviewers' training programs.

Achieving effective training outcomes would require engaging cultural informants to assist trainees in understanding the candidates' culture.

I think it, from my point of view, it may have been better for me to consult with somebody from that culture about perhaps what, not to put everyone in the same you know, box or something. To understand, I guess the work ethic, not just to presume, the work ethics from what particular culture look for as a whole when they're, you know looking for work, what type of bosses or what type of approach from the managers they look for, so maybe to confer with somebody within that culture about the best way to approach it. (MH 611-616)

5.7.4. Interview panel

Interviewer judgements are influenced by the race composition of the interviewing panel (e.g., Lin, Dobbins, & Farh, 1992). Taking into consideration the backgrounds of candidates being interviewed, organisations must carefully consider the racial and cultural composition of their interviewing panels. In addition, they must also consider the size and gender of the composition of the interview panels used in intercultural interviews.

So I don't know, what was that about. But overall improvement I'd say, maybe one on one interview would be better. I feel more comfortable with one on one. (C09 840-841)

I think if possible two interviewers, would be, like one male, one female. Because male and female, their perspective different. (C08 745-746)

5.8.   Implications for government

Job selection practices can be discriminatory, making it difficult for new settlers to become employed (Carr, 2010, pp.125-150). This study shows that the problem has more to do with a lack of cultural awareness and sensitivity, than with discriminatory biases. Diversity characterises the cultural landscape of Australia and its workforce. The benefits of a diverse workforce possessing the many different skills that Australia needs continues to elude many employers, with the result that many skilled immigrants with a high level of English continue to be underemployed (Daly, Barker and McCarthy, 2005). The present study has shown that there are significant cultural differences that pose challenges to interviewers and candidates in selection interviews. The government needs to provide the resources to train organisations and incoming migrants on the challenges of interpersonal communication, not just in selection interviews but also in the workplace generally. The study has shown that English language proficiency is only one aspect of this training need. Cultural savvy is also a core need. The selection interview is a key situation where interpersonal interaction and communication is crucial. There are other key situations that would also benefit from government training support, such as those involving team relationships and conflict handling skills.

5.9.   Limitations

It is important to say that the purpose of this study has not been to expose interviewers who may be discriminating against minority ethnic candidates during selection interviews. Neither has it been concerned with uncovering prejudicial attitudes and stereotyping behaviour that sometimes occurs at interviews. However, in researching

the process by which the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates make attributions during their interactions in intercultural selection interviews, discriminatory factors influencing the process may have been uncovered. Notwithstanding this point, this section sets out the limitations of this research.

5.9.1. Cross-cultural research

Research participants who are not proficient in the English language are a particular issue for the researcher (Squires, 2009; Suh, Kagan and Strumpf, 2009). An obvious limitation of this research is the fact that the debrief interviews with the Chinese candidates from non-English speaking backgrounds had to be conducted in English instead of in the candidates' mother-tongues of Mandarin or Cantonese. This was especially unsatisfactory when the candidates' English-language skills were poor. Mitigating this limitation was the fact that the researcher and the transcriber had Chinese backgrounds, which eliminated many potential problems that could have arisen. Understanding some of the candidates' 'broken English' was not an issue.

5.9.2. Convenience sampling

Convenience sampling is common in qualitative research (Sekaran, 2003, p.276). The choice of a financial services organisation was largely influenced by the researcher's personal network and familiarity with the industry in Sydney. AFSO largely decided on the business areas to which the researcher would have access. Initially, only the retail network was asked to participate in the project. When no sample was forthcoming after three months, the catchment was extended to include business banking, information technology, and accounting. In the end, business banking and

the retail network provided the requisite sample for the study. Both business areas recruit for entry-level positions. It is also noted that the decision to make the selection interviews available to the researcher was completely in the hands of the human resource consultants at AFSO. Hence, convenience sampling rather than theoretical sampling drove the data collection.

5.9.3. Small sample size

It is in the nature of qualitative research that sample sizes are small (Kacmar and Hochwarter, 1995), and in the employment interview literature small sample sizes are seen in Bilbow and Yeung (1998), Lai and Wong (2000), Wong and Lai (2000), and Takata (2003). Small sample sizes mean that the results of the studies are not widely generalisable and the conclusions must be further tested. It is, however, acknowledged that qualitative studies using small sample sizes can provide a rich and deep understanding of the studied phenomenon (Mintzberg, 1979).

5.9.4. Researchers are not culture-free

Researchers' cultural origins impact on their work (McDonald, 2000). The researcher's interpretive mechanisms expose the data to the culture of the researcher. The 'mental programming' with cultural assumptions applies to researchers as much as to anyone else (Hofstede, 1980). Through the mechanism of 'mental programming', values, perceptions and interpretations of things are processed through the viewpoint of the culture from which they are viewed and studied. This 'cultural blinkering' may restrict the researchers' ability to see new cultural factors, because they are primed to see known factors to the exclusion of new possibilities. For this

reason some cultural factors manifested in the interviews may not have been captured. On the other hand, the ontology and epistemology of this research takes account of this. It accepts that the researcher interpreted her data in the context of her personal, social and cultural background and experience. Interpretive theory also justifies the independent studies done on interviewer and candidate experiences. The researcher was interpreting and expressing her version of the realities of the interviewers and candidates in the study. Qualitative research is essentially creative and interpretive (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.23). Researchers take their beliefs and understandings with them into their research of the phenomena under investigation (Merriam, 2001). They do not approach their studies from a neutral standpoint (Shah, 2004), and this is acknowledged in the research.

Accordingly, adopting an emic view of research, it is acknowledged here that the researcher is an ethnic Chinese who was born and raised in multicultural Malaysia, and has lived in New Zealand and Australia for over 30 years. She has 20 years of work experience in the financial services industry as an employee and an external consultant. Her roles in the industry have included those of corporate finance executive, retail banking officer, agency recruiter and outplacement specialist. These backgrounds and experiences will have influenced the researcher's view of her research. On the other hand, it can also be acknowledged that with her cultural and professional background, the researcher has contributed to this research in two ways. First, she has been intuitively able to appreciate many of the experiences of Chinese migrants looking for employment in Australia. This has arisen from her experience as an ethnic Chinese who has gone through the challenges of being a Chinese person looking for employment in Australia. This appreciation has been reinforced with insights gained from her role as an outplacement specialist at a time when many of her

clients were Chinese actively looking for employment. Second, her experience as an agency recruiter for a wide range of companies has enabled the researcher to understand many of the challenges that interviewers in Australia, who tend to be non-Chinese, are confronted with when interviewing Chinese candidates.

5.9.5. Theories are not culture-free

Theories of organisations and behaviour are not culture-free (Hofstede, 1980, 1981). Criticisms of United States research methods when applied to other countries have been noted (Stewart and Bennett, 1991). These methods, where they are heavily influenced by United States culture and values, have even been said to invalidate the research, and call its ethics into question (Thatcher, 2001). If insufficient care is taken, a researcher's bias can impact on research methods (Stewart and Bennett, 1991), making them unethical and therefore invalid (Thatcher, 2001). For example, cultural bias is more problematic in qualitative research that uses interviews to gather data (McDonald, 2000). Through the interpretive mechanisms of the researcher, data becomes exposed to their culture. How the data is interpreted and reconstructed taints and limits it. Cultural theories should therefore be used to limit these effects by taking into account the background of the researchers as well as the place where the theories were devised.

5.9.6. Overlooking masking effects

Masking can be a problem in the study of culture. A combination of the limits of a researcher's knowledge of the culture of the participants in their study, the participants' acute awareness of the cultural differences between themselves, and their

ability to modify their own behaviour to better connect with each other, may lead to the researcher's missing cultural factors present in the communication between the participants. This masking effect can limit such a study.

5.9.7. Managing the limitations

No research is perfect, and limitations that arise can and should be managed. Self-awareness is imperative (McDonald, 2000). It helps to achieve that necessary cultural distance between the researcher and the researched material if the researcher is able to discern the 'what' and the 'how' of cultural differences (Monaghan and Goodman, 2007). Monaghan and Goodman recommended that to achieve such a critical distance, researchers should write about and reflect on their own experiences of culture, so as to compare their own communication processes with those of others, and to triangulate data types. Self-awareness of one's own cultural lens means that one can start to harness that awareness to advantage in the course of research.

This research used two techniques to achieve self-awareness in this regard. First, throughout this research, reflective memos were written to capture various observations and thoughts. These included the researcher's own involvement and views upon the research. Second, the selection interview data were triangulated with the debrief data. These were further supported by field notes and observations made by the researcher in the course of collecting and transcribing the taped interviews.

Knowing one's own culture and combining that with one's experiences of the participants' cultures means that the researcher can more appropriately define, study and understand their topic from a better vantage point. For the purpose of this research,

this vantage point arose from the researcher being an ethnic Chinese, born and bred in Asia, and who as an adult was immersed in a predominantly Caucasian culture, initially in New Zealand and then in Australia. This background contributed to the research through the fact that the researcher was able to more clearly appreciate the cultural similarities and differences between Chinese candidates and non-Chinese interviewers in Australia.

This study of the Chinese candidates being interviewed by an Australian organisation in Sydney taps into the diversity of cultural backgrounds of the researcher/supervisory team behind this study. The researcher is a Chinese candidate being supervised by an Indian and a Polish supervisory team. All have been residents of Australia for a long period of time. This has provided cultural lenses for better understanding the participants in the study. Collaborating in this way to define, conduct and analyse the research can help mitigate some of the research.

5.10. Future directions

The three criteria of a successful selection interview identified in Chapter 1 were:

- The ability to predict training and/or job performance

- Being non-discriminatory

- Being able to produce positive candidate reactions

This thesis has shown that achieving successful interview outcomes is the responsibility of all the key stakeholders, i.e., the candidates, interviewers, organisations and the government. Researchers are also stakeholders contributing to the goal of achieving successful interview outcomes. While previous studies have

examined one or several variables at a time, this research has holistically gathered the factors influencing the live selection interview as a single event, and determined the relative influences of these various factors on the interview. Many studies have, like this one, investigated the intercultural interview from the interviewers' point of view, but fewer have done so from the candidates' viewpoint (Latham and Millman, 2002), and very few have simultaneously explored interviewer's and candidate's views. This study has given equal voice to the non-Chinese interviewers and the Chinese candidates interviewing for entry-level positions in a large Australian financial services organisation in Sydney, and has established the similarities and differences in perceptions between the interviewers and candidates. It has identified nine themes influencing the interview, and highlighted the phenomena of culture and attribution in intercultural selection interviews. Suggestions for future research to further promote the conduct of successful intercultural interviews from the viewpoint of all the stakeholders are as follows:

1. Quantitative studies are required to test the relative strengths of the various influencing factors identified in this research.

2. While this research has highlighted the importance of career fit in interview outcomes, future research, as Macan has suggested (2009), should identify the constructs that are being measured in the interview.

3. Future research should explore the significance of culture and attribution in intercultural selection interviews in the context of other cultural groups. For example, the United States has many Hispanics and a framework presented in this thesis may benefit the interview process between non-Hispanic interviewers and Hispanic candidates.

4. The type of job being applied for can affect group differences in interviews (Huffcutt and Roth, 1998), so this study should be replicated for different

positions within and outside AFSO as well as in other industries.

5. Cultural influences in structured behavioural interviews are inevitable. If employers are to continue to rely on the structured behavioural interview for staff selection, research should be conducted to isolate the various factors of culture so that the interview may be modified to ensure that it is culture-fair.

6. This study has assumed that perceptions translate into actual outcomes. Future studies should examine the influence of the various factors on actual outcomes, such as interviewers' actual hiring decisions and candidates' actual job choice decisions.

7. Silence is culturally determined (Katriel and Philipsen, 2007) and silence in communication is emerging as an area of research in its own right (Penna, Mocci and Sechi, 2009). In cross-cultural communication, silence can be culturally loaded. This factor has not been examined in this study and is an area for future research.

8. The significance of the physical environment in the intercultural interview has not been researched. As an external influence on candidates' perceptions, this is an important area for future research.

9. Trust is important in interpersonal communication and relationship building. Future research into how trust is being defined and developed is warranted.

10. The factors identified in this thesis contribute to the pragmatic development of training in interviewing for interviewers and candidates. For the training to be effective, future research should investigate the best way to transfer the knowledge acquired by this research to actual skills that promote intercultural competence in the intercultural selection interview.

11. The influence of culture-based attribution on the psychological contract should be investigated.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Ethics approval letter

M
MACQUARIE
UNIVERSITY ~ SYDNEY

14 March 2008

Mrs Choon-Hwa Lim
99 St Johns Avenue
Gordon NSW 2072

Reference: HE22FEB2008-D05626

Dear Mrs Lim

FINAL APPROVAL

Title of project: *Cultural intelligence in the cross-cultural job interview*

Thank you for your recent correspondence. Your responses have satisfactorily addressed the outstanding issues raised by the Committee. You may now proceed with your research.

Please note the following standard requirements of approval:
1. Approval will be for a period of twelve months. At the end of this period, if the project has been completed, abandoned, discontinued or not commenced for any reason, you are required to submit a Final Report on the project. If you complete the work earlier than you had planned you must submit a Final Report as soon as the work is completed. The Final Report is available at http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/ethics/human/forms
2. However, at the end of the 12 month period if the project is still current you should instead submit an application for renewal of the approval if the project has run for less than five (5) years. This form is available at http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/ethics/human/forms. If the project has run for more than five (5) years you cannot renew approval for the project. You will need to complete and submit a Final Report (see Point 1 above) and submit a new application for the project. (The five year limit on renewal of approvals allows the Committee to fully re-review research in an environment where legislation, guidelines and requirements are continually changing, for example, new child protection and privacy laws).
3. Please remember the Committee must be notified of any alteration to the project.
4. You must notify the Committee immediately in the event of any adverse effects on participants or of any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
5. At all times you are responsible for the ethical conduct of your research in accordance with the guidelines established by the University (http://www.ro.mq.edu.au/ethics/human).

If you will be applying for or have applied for internal or external funding for the above project **it is your responsibility** to provide Macquarie University's Research Grants Officer with a copy of this letter as soon as possible. The Research Grants Officer will not inform external funding agencies that you have final approval for your project and funds will not be released until the Research Grants Officer has received a copy of this final approval letter.

Yours sincerely

P.P.

Dr Margaret Stuart
Director of Research Ethics
Chair, Ethics Review Committee [Human Research]
cc. Professor Robin Kramar

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487

Appendix 2: Researcher-participant interview questions

Questions for the researcher-interviewer interview

1. When you left the interview, how did you feel it went?

2. What were your concerns before you conducted the interview?

3. What did you think was the role of the candidate in the interview?

4. What stood out for you about the interview?

5. What did the outcome of the interview mean to you?

6. Did you use the candidate online profile? In what way has that contributed to your decision?

7. Is there any question that I have not asked which I should have asked?

Questions for the researcher-candidate interview

1. When you left the interview, how did you feel it went?

2. What were your concerns before you went to the interview?

3. What did you think was the role of the manager in the interview?

4. What stood out for you about the interview?

5. What did the outcome of the interview mean to you?

6. How did you feel abou the environment in which the interview took place?

7. Is there any question that I have not asked that I should have asked?

Appendix 3: Sample of participant information and consent form

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM – manager's copy

NAME OF PROJECT: The cross-cultural job interview

You are invited to participate in a study of culture in the job interview. The purpose of the study is to understand the experiences of managers and candidates in the cross-cultural job interview.

This study is being conducted by Choon-Hwa Lim, telephone number: 0411 308 996, email: choon-hwa.lim@students.mq.edu.au to meet the requirements for a PhD degree in Management. Choon-Hwa's research is being supervised by the following:

1. Principal Supervisor: Professor Robin Kramar, phone: (612) 9850 9984, email: Robin.Kramar@mgsm.edu.au, Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.
2. Associate Supervisor: Associate Professor Ruth Neumann, phone: (612) 9850 7766, email: Ruth.Neumann@vc.mq.edu.au, Macquarie Graduate School of Management, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.
3. Adjunct Supervisor: Associate Professor Christopher Chan, phone: (416) 736 2100 ext. 30593, email: cristoph@yorku.ca, School of Human Resource Management, York University, Toronto, Canada.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to allow your first interview meeting with a candidate to be audio taped. As soon as the candidate has been informed of the outcome of your job application, you will be contacted to meet with Choon-Hwa for a 1-hour meeting to share your cross-cultural job interview experience with her. Please note the following:

1. To assist you in expressing yourself, you may choose to bring to this meeting, some pictures (eg photographs, magazine pictures, etc) that reflect your experience of the cross-cultural job interview. Giving these pictures to Choon-Hwa will of course be voluntary.
2. During this meeting, the session will again be audio taped, and Choon-Hwa may make some notes.

3. You may wish to make available to Choon-Hwa any documents, such as the job description, or notes that you may have made for yourself before, during or after the job interview. Again, giving these to Choon-Hwa is voluntary.

Any information or personal details gathered in the course of this study are confidential except as required by law. No individual will be identified in any publication of the results. All audio tapes will be immediately transcribed and destroyed. All transcriptions, and all other documents collected and notes made, will be entered into a software. Only Choon-Hwa and her supervisors will have access to these data that will be kept in secured storage. All data will be retained for a period of 5 years from the date of submission of the PhD thesis for examination.

This study is completely independent of your place of employment and its employment practices. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason and without consequence by informing your employer, Choon-Hwa or any of the supervisors named above.

A brief report entitled "Tips for effective cross-cultural job interviewing" will be mailed to you by your employer at the completion of the research. I hope that you will find this report helpful in your future job interviews with candidates whose cultural background is different to yours.

I, MANAGER, have read and understand the information above. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research, knowing that I can withdraw from it at any time without consequence. I have been given a copy of this form to keep.

Manager's Name   _____
(BLOCK letters)

Manager's Signature   _____   Date: _____

Researcher's Name   _____
(BLOCK letters)

Researcher's Signature _____ Date: _____

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee (Human Research). If you have any complaints or reservations about any ethical aspect of your participation in this research, you may contact the Ethics Review Committee through the Director, Research Ethics (telephone: 9850 7854; email: ethics@mq.edu.au). Any complaint you make will be treated in confidence and investigated, and you will be informed of the outcome.

MANAGER'S / RESEARCHER'S COPY

Appendix 4: Sample of an intercultural selection interview case
- **Transcript of live selection interview, S06**
- **Transcript of researcher debrief with interviewer, MF**
- **Transcript of researcher debrief with candidate, C06**

(a) Transcript of live selection interview, S06

MF

um shat, what we'll do is just um talk a little bit about you first of all, and and um we get a bit of an understanding of of of why we're here today. So part of this role is to apply for a customer service representative role [C06: yep] which is our entry level um probably, probably the best thing that I can probably ask at the moment is um just probably, obviously, the first important thing is, why the AFSO? Why did you actually apply for a job at the AFSO?

C06

ur actually first, I was graduated from Macquarie University [MF: yep] and my major was accounting study [MF: yes] so basically it's related to commerce. And my dream job also to go to the bank to work.

MF

yeah?

C06

yeah. And actually I found the opportunity, AFSO is hiring for someone to doing the customer service [MF: yep] which is relate to my current job, cause I'm working in the telecommunication company, which is the 3G dealer [MF: yep] so, everyday my job is like face to face to the customer like, so customer service job I think I got the, quite a bit skills to doing this, so like customer service [MF: yep] yeah, and ... ((MF interrupts)).

MF

What about, what about customer service, I mean it's such a broad term um what is the probably the most exciting part for you in the role?

C06

ur actually mm for me I'm thinking, doing the customer service I actually helping the people [MF: yep]. So I serve the, I sell the product to the customer [MF: yep] and of course I need to explain the benefit for them first [MF: yep] so, what I do is helping them, so they can get the benefit from what I sell to them [MF: yep] And if they got any difficulty, anything, I can help them as well, so the customer service not only about the product [MF: yep] it's about the after sales customer service [MF: yep] so basically, cause related to my current job [MF: yep] I'm selling the mobile phone

[MF: yep] so basically if they got any problem about the phones or whatever, I still need to help them to solve that [MF: yep] yeah, check their account, whatever.

MF

So that's the great stuff, you are there to help clients [C06: yeah]. What do you, what do you feel is probably the hardest part of the job, probably not the enjoyable part, so what, what do you least enjoy about customer service?

C06

ur actually, for me it's fine, I'm enjoy that.

MF

yeah?

C06

yeah, not really not really hard for me.

MF

No?

C06

Cause I like talking with the cus-, like talking with the people [MF: yep] yeah, even they are not purchasing the stuff, I can chat with them [MF: yep] so I, I enjoy my daily life [MF: yep] even sometimes there's a tough customer [MF: yep], make them happy [MF: yep], make me happy as well [MF: OK.] yeah, it's like a challenge.

MF

Alright. So um so obviously you're um your in the sale role, and that's a pretty challenging ur you know environment for sales and everything like that [C06: yep] um can you give an example ur where you use your fact finding skills to gain information from a client, how do you go about it and what was the outcome? so ur what I mean by that question is that obviously fact finding, it's a questioning technique [C06: yeah] ur and and obviously you needed to find out information to obviously get the most appropriate product to the customer [C06: yep] so how did you go about it and what was the outcome?

C06

ur basically because we go to training as well, so I, just identify the customer into some category [MF: yep] cause from your chatting with your customer, you can find out the customer is slower pace or faster pace [M: yep]. So basically if it's a fast pace customer, just listen to what they wanted, their requirement, so we, I just follow what they want, and then [MF: yep] give, offer them the [MF: yep] offer them the product [MF: yep] and then some lower pace customer, they're, it's like actually want to listen to you what you talking about [MF: yep] so they're quite easy to be influence by me [MF: yep] so basically I need to tell all the details about the product [MF: yep] for

them, and explain the benefit for them and then they can very happy to purchase my products.

MF

OK. um being able to cross-sell the bank's products is an aspect of the job, so a lot, a lot of, part of the job is, is around up selling, and ur and providing excellent service, one example of when you successfully applied cross-selling, what did you do, and what was the outcome? So in your current role, what was ur a previous time, what did you actually cross-sold in that environment?

C06

ur OK. yep cause ur talking about my current role [MF: yep] selling mobile phone [MF: yep] so with all the mobile phones, it's related to accessories as well [MF: yep] so, after they get the phone I need to up-sell, like if you want the accessories, like hard case [MF: yep] or card charger [MF: yep] for the phone [MF: yep] so the customer will need to get it, and also the memory card, I can mention lots of things [MF: yep] yeah, even some customer, just from helping them, they just come, even not purchasing the phone [MF: yep] I can help them to get some accessories to protect their phone, and services [MF: OK.] and also the extended warranty [MF: yep] yeah basically they looking for the warranty for the phone, cause normally phone only come with one year warranty, so I can recommend the customer.

MF

So how often would you sell a mobile phone, get the card charger sold, additional memory, an extended warranty, when was the last time you did all those all in one hit?

C06

Even today.

MF

Today? ((exclamation of delight and surprise)).

C06

yeah.

MF

Really?

C06

Yeah.

MF

How'd you do that?

C06

Cause I just did the, I just finish my job [MF: yep] I just asked for early leave [MF: yep] and I said that I got interview here [MF: yep] yeah.

MF

So that was your last customer.

C06

Oh yeah my customer is, actually lots of students, some working North Ryde [MF: yep] yeah close to the Macquarie University [MF: yes, yep] yeah the students were very happy to talk with me.

MF

So they want everything, do they?

C06

Basically.

MF

So how do you target the student market? Cause obviously it's a it's a tough market? You know and there's, you're at Macquarie Shopping Centre, are you?

C06

yeah.

MF

yep, sorry, it's a big shopping centre, I know it quite well [C06: yeah] um how do you, I mean obviously not every students has as much money as the other person, um how do you, how do you position, like all these other additional services that the client requires, how do you, how do you actually position that with them?

C06

ur actually for the student, it's quite easy for me [MF: yep] cause we're almost the same age range [MF: OK.] age range yeah when I talk with them, talk first of all international student [MF: yep] yeah cause my first language is Chinese [MF: yeah yeah], so basically I'm really honest to them [M: yep] so, I just tell them it's a post-paid [MF: yep], so students just sign the contract, you don't need to put anything today [MF: yep], and you can save quite a lot of money to purchase some accessory [MF: yep] cause you gonna use the phone for two years [MF: yep] if you break it [MF: yep] or cause we are not cover the physical damage [MF: yep], you get some extra thing to protect your handset [MF: yep], so will cover ur [MF OK.], benefit you quite a lot [MF: alright] yeah, even ten dollars for the hard case, you can save like like two or five coffee [MF: yeah] everyday [MF: yeah] like that, so student all happy with that.

MF

yep, no as I said, it's a, it's a, there's always a way to figure something.

C06

yeah, always try to find a way to tell them you can get the benefit from the product [MF: yes] so they are happy to do it.

MF

Fantastic.

C06

Yeah.

MF

Can you um can you give me an example of when you practically sought external business or external referral on behalf of um you know your current employer in Digi- is it Digital yeah?

C06

Digital, yeah.

MF

Is there a bit of time, when you've actually asked for external referrals? Like when you serve somebody, yeah and you've done it really really well, have you actually asked if they knew anybody else that you could help?

C06

Always ask.

MF

Yeah, always ask?

C06

Always ask.

MF

And how does that go for you, like do you do you actually have any success doing that?

C06

Very successful in doing that yeah ((small laugh)) Cause for Three-G mobile we got the referral programme, so, for all the students, if the customer they join Three [MF: yep] after that I tell them, you come second day, I will instruct you how to refer your friend, so basically if your friend joins me as well, both of you can get 25 dollars credit [MF: Oh OK.] so they are very happy to do that, the more you can refer, the more credit you can get [MF: OK.] yeah.

MF

It's not bad.

C06

It's really good, cause with the market, yeah.

MF

Very competitive market as well.

C06

yeah.

MF

What approach have you taken in the past when you've been behind your targets? So do you have a target at the store?

C06

yeah we have the store target, also have the individual target [MF: OK.] yeah basically all of us need to reach the productivity [MF: yep] have points reserve, if you work eight hours, basically you need to make three sales, in eight hours.

MF

Three sales in eight hours?

C06

yep, so you can reach your target [MF: OK.] ur ... ((MF interrupts)).

MF

... so how did you go with that?

C06

Honestly, up till, since I get this job, I never behind the target.

MF

Never behind the target? ((disbelieving tone with a smile?)).

C06

Never behind the target.

MF

How good is that? In, in some of your other roles, that you've, you've done, so obviously, you've only been working for this place since then?

C06

In Hungry Jacks, right?

MF

Hungry Jacks, do you have, do you have targets there?

C06

Yep, we have the daily target as well [MF: yeah] and ur we need to have the shift planning, so we rotating for the managers, yep we have the shift planning, and we can track in the sales every half an hour, so basically for me, the bay, the best way to reach a target, you need to track in all the sales every hour or half an hour.

MF

OK., so what do when you're behind the target, like what do you do?

C06

Suggest to sale.

MF

Suggest to sale, so how did you position that to your people? um cause obviously you you were in a management role there, is that right? yep so how how did you actually ((cough)) how did you position that?

C06

ur I set the example ((MF coughs)) for them [MF: yep], I'm working very hard, so I need to show them how to make things faster [MF: yep], you need to do things effective ((MF coughs)) and efficient [MF: yep] so the speed you doing faster, so you can serve more customers [MF: great] and sometimes if you make the customer waiting, you going to lose the sale, so that's why I tell them, you need to find out the customer requirement, you need to perform the thing more effectively and enthusiastic [MF: mm mm] yeah.

MF

And that was the Hungry Jacks at Macquarie?

C06

That was the Hungry Jacks at Centre Point.

MF

Where was it?

C06

In Centre Point.

MF

Centre Point? That's a busy one, very busy one.

C06

((laughs)) yes, during lunch time.

MF

O yeah,yeah um can you give an example of when you displayed outstanding service to a colleague or a client to get a job done, so um yeah so, if you think about the ultimate service, actually, probably, probably ask the question a bit more differently here, if you, if you define the ultimate customer services theory, right, where you walk out of there and go 'wow' what would you, describe that? Can you describe that for me?

C06

The excellent customer ... ((MF interrupts)).

MF

You're the customer, you went in to an organization, whether it's a clothing, a food place or a restaurant or whatever, and you walk out of there and you say 'wow', what, can you just describe that for me?

C06

Yep ur for example ur if I go to, let me think about it ((pause)) go inside, when I go, for example if I go into a restaurant [MF: yep] when I just go inside the restaurant, they open the door for me, and all the staff say welcome [MF: yep] warm welcome to me [MF: yep] I already feel happy [MF: yep] so whe- they going to instruct me to the table, and after that give me the menu book [MF: yep] and, they're really patient and bring us the drink first ( ) basically for the restaurant, they, a good customer service for me is really important, and also the food they provided to us [MF: yep] yeah I going to enjoy the meal yeah [MF: yep] if for the like our banking or something [MF: yep] I go, I go, I went to, cause I'm the customer of the CB [MF: yep] I went there [MF: yep] and they introduce me the, lots of programme they have, and ur they're very nice cause the way probably, a bit like, similar as this AFSO [MF: yep] they got personal rooms [MF: yep] so, you sit inside, they also offer you the coffee [MF OK.] do you want a coffee or water [MF: yep] yeah so make the customer really relax inside [MF: excellent] they explain all the products to you [MF: yep] yeah probably so you can make the money on this product, they got the term deposit or whatever, yeah make me really happy.

MF

OK., alright, so for you, I mean going into a studio is important, yeah? Like going into an office?

C06

Yeah, going into an office, personalised [MF: and it's personalised, yep] individual one.

MF

OK., but what, you see, that's fairly normal these days, I think that you, you would expect to go into a bank and if you're looking at products and services that you could be sitting in a studio, what would be the difference for you if they actually say, you know what, there's no other bank like CB? Alright, because they just look after me so well, what would that bank have to be doing for you?

C06

I think the professional of the person [MF: yeah] the person who serve me, they can tell me all the product very clearly [MF: yep] tell, they find out what I need yeah [MF: yep] after that explain all the information to me [MF: yep] so yeah I will find out, that's what I want.

MF

OK., alright um have you ever had a time where, you've actually had to put your um you've used, you're cross, quite strongly, so in an environment, like team environment so obviously, you know there's challenging times and, where you've you've got to sort of say to somebody, you know what, you're not really performing,

or, I didn't like the way you serve that customer then because you're quite rude to them, or anything like that, have you actually had to do that before?

C06

To our, as a colleague working with me?

MF

yeah, yeah.

C06

ur basically I won't say this to them [MF: yep] it's like, if you say this straight away to them [MF: yep] you're gonna to make them um sad [MF: yep] cause our job is customer service, if you're, if you not feeling good, so you better quit for the interest of your customer first you know [MF: yep], so I can try to tell them the other way [MF: yep] so I will say ur you're doing quite well in this part [MF: yep] but, if you can improve on this part, it will be perfect for you [MF: yep] so probably you can tell the customer in this way so it will help you a lot in the next time you serve the customer, yeah.

MF

OK., alright um so it's pretty crazy there in in, I know ur at Hungry Jacks at Centre Point would have been pretty crazy at lunch time, then obviously if you're working on a Thursday night at the ur Macquarie Shopping Centre gets a little bit, bit hectic there as well? yeah? [C06: yeah] it's a busy time Thursday night shopping, or when's when's a busy time there?

C06

ur actually it's my, my place is like, it's hard to tell you, in front of the Greater Union Cinema.

MF

yeah, yeah, yeah I know where it is.

C06

So all the time they like busy traffic in there [MF: yep] so almost, basic, Thursday night is quite busy [MF: oh] actually after five o'clock is busy [MF: OK.] as well.

MF

So, when it's really hectic, how do you cope? Like how how do you, how do you prepare yourself, how do you deal with the situation when it's just flat out, you you've got no other, you've got no more staff, and it's just crazy, how do you deal with it?

C06

ur that time, I will, actually, I will I will calm down first [MF: yep] I won't be like stressed up [MF: yep] that's how you can't deal with everything good, so if the customer, the first, so follow the order [MF: yep] first customer come, I will ask the requirement you want [MF: yep] during the period I will have the eye contact with

500

other customer [MF: yep] so probably tell them you can wait for a while [MF: yep] so yeah some customer will be nice to me and they probably wait and often to go to other places for a while [MF: yep] and ask the first customer, and help her find out, and ur waiting for the next customer to come come back [MF: yep] yeah, basically, it will be fine for me.

MF

yeah?

C06

yeah quite, always, always, happen.

MF

yep [C06: yeah] nah, that's fine, so just stay calm is it, you ...? ((C06 interrupts)).

C06

Stay calm, and always like keep eye contact with the rest of the customer.

MF

yeah, so acknowledge.

C06

yeah, so probably some other customer they are not want to purchase some stuff, make some enquiry [MF: yep] so I can get them the brochure to them straight away [MF: perfect] so probably they can have a look at that.

MF

Good stuff. One of the quality of the bank is the staff has a professional approach to their work, obviously being in a building like this, it's the biggest branch in Australia and, you know [C06: yeah] there's the CEO sitting upstairs, so there's a lot of pressure here ur tell me how you currently demonstrate a professional approach to work, so what are, what are some of the things that um you're doing that's professional?

C06

Professional? [MF: mm] ur in my current role [MF: yep] yeah, I think my sale skill is quite professional [MF: yep] yep cause I need to ur if you not know all the detail about your product [MF: yep] OK. sell to the customer ... ((MF interrupts)).

MF

... so, know your ... ((C06 continues)).

C06

... they won't trust you.

MF

Know your products?

C06

yeah, and know the product.

MF

So no bluffing, hey?

C06

yeah, also the, procedure of all the policies [MF: yep] so probably sometimes the customer gonna come back asking, how come my thing is like, I wanna swap it, so before they purchase that, you need to inform them, the phone only comes with one year warranty [MF: OK.] it doesn't cover physical liquid damage, so you need to tell them the policy [MF: yep] or some customer enquiry some like some information about their accounts [MF: yep] so I need to instruct them to contact with the customer service [MF: mm mm] yeah or some customers, lots of customers, lots of the small things for the ... ((MF interrupts)).

MF

Yep. OK. so your main message there is that your sales skills, you know, it, it generally got to be you know, right on the money, knowing your products is, is, is, is paramount [C06: yeah] um and be honest um [C06: yep] you know about the, the things that are going to be important when the client goes, hang on my phone is dead after 14 months [C06: yep] you didn't tell me that my phone was only good for only 12 months [C06: yeah] and things like that.

C06

And also another important is the confidential for the customer's information [MF: yep] because basically if they want to sign the contract, we also need to do the credit checks, so the required, basic something, the same as the bank, when you need their driving licence or copy of that [MF: yep] so we must make sure, make the customer confident alright [MF: yep] so comfortable with that [MF: yep] so it's confidential, don't worry about that.

MF

No, good point. um what's the most, you always remember difficult customers, I mean, I can talk about many that I've had over the years, you know being difficult to start with, and then they all of a sudden they're my biggest fan, so I think you know, when you get them on side, they're great, when they they're not on side, they they're you know they're quite high maintenance for you, um what's the um you remember the probably most difficult customer you've ever dealt with in the last say 18 months. Can you remember any difficult customers you dealt with?

C06

ur ((little laugh)) basically, I'm, I'm really like the Australian, like Australia, because they're really, they understand the procedure everything [MF: yep] they won't say anything like, I tell them a policy, OK. that that's fair, it's fair enough [MF: yep] for some international, um international student [MF: yep] probably they didn't get the

thing from me [MF: yep] but they got from other places, they didn't like, explain everything to them properly [MF: yep yep] so they come back to me [MF: yep] so why they doing things like this, how come Three is cheating [MF: yep, yeah] so that time, I need to find out, listen to them [MF: yep] their complaining first [MF: yep], after that find out what they need [MF: yep] I say OK., I will help you to solve this problem, but what they did, probably, I feel sorry to you [MF: yep] you need to say that, so that time I need to nicely cause they are, even we are dealer [MF: yep] they didn't get the thing from me, but we are the same ... ((MF interrupts)).

C06

... same company [MF: yep] the reputation is quite important.

MF

Absolutely.

C06

So I shouldn't like rude to the customer [MF: yep] try to find the best way to help them out.

MF

yep, that's a great point ur what's the most important thing you look for in a job?

C06

For this job? ur … ((MF interrupts)).

MF

No, what's the most important thing, forget the fact that you're applying for the bank job, what's the most important thing you look for in a job?

C06

ur actually I want to get lots of experience.

MF

Experience is most important for you?

C06

Experience is really important for me ur just thinking a few things ( ) [MF: yep] you not communicate with people [MF: yep] actually I like communicate with people [MF: yep] so you get more information about the daily everything happen around you [MF: yep] so you won't like have the gap with other people [MF: OK.] for me.

MF

What about um how do you ensure that you get what you want out of a job, what would you like, you've been with your current employer for the 18 months ur and obviously they're looking after you ur or you've been reasonable happy with them up to this particular point, how do you ensure you get what you get what you need out of your employer, what do you do?

C06

ur ((pause)) I can … ((MF interrupts)).

MF

What I mean by that is [C06: yep] like, obviously, I run a large branch, alright? [C06: yep] and I've got 50 staff and that work for me here [C06: yep] and it's quite a challenging job, but I want to make sure that I have fun every day, I want to make sure that my staff are enjoying themselves, I want to make sure the customers are happy um so what I do, around that is I make sure that I touch base with you know just about everyone in the building so yeah, 50 ur how are you today? ur and obviously I, I do go and talk to the customers as well, so I make sure that, you know, things are running smoothly, in your role, obviously you know, you've got sales targets, you've got to look after customers, how do you, and there's part you want to enjoy yourself, you want to have fun, you wanna make sure the days go quick, and all that sort of thing, how do you make sure that you get what you want every day?

C06

ur every ((pause)) … ((MF interrupts)).

MF

How do you make sure you have fun at work?

C06

Cause I, every day when I'm going there [MF: yep] you should have a positive mind [MF: OK.] yeah in yourself [MF: yep] so just thinking, OK. it's ur new, it's a beginning [MF: yep] so, today how many targets I need to have, so basically everyday have a plan [MF: yep] and monthly I got a plan as well [MF: OK.] cause our, our manager set the plan for all the staff [MF: yeah] so I follow the, follow the target [MF: yep] to make the one more target for myself as well [MF: OK.], so divide it individually, probably, how many customer I need to get [MF: yep] so when I'm going there, I know OK. today is, today is my target, I need to finish this one [MF: yep] so I will focus on my target [MF: yep] yeah [MF: OK.] or customer, or today I got a customer to service, when they come [MF: yep] so I can help them, I feel very happy for them.

MF

No worries. um have you ever had to think outside the square with the customer, like you know, you know Three policy, it's you know, a big long document, and it says, clause one, clause two, clause three, clause four, have you ever had to push the limits and think outside the square to get a resolution?

C06

ur not, not really, no really.

MF

Not really? yeah?

C06

yeah.

MF

Is there being a time where you had to, you know, show a bit of initiative to get something resolved or, or get the sale over the line, where it normally wasn't going to happen, is there any times that you had to do that?

C06

ur basically I always follow the policy [MF: yep] follow the rules, cause otherwise cause I leave, it, it's a contract so I need to be responsible for the com- company [MF: yep] and responsible for the, for the customer [MF: yep] so I should do some-, I shouldn't [MF: yep] beyond this policy.

MF

yeah, I, I suppose what I'm looking at is, like, you know, on a particular given day, somebody comes in and, deposit a cheque for a thousand dollars and, policy tells us that it's three days to clearance, now obviously I can take some discretion around that to, clear the cheque or maybe release a little bit of it, to you know give the client some money so that they can, you know enjoy the weekend or something like that, is there any times that you can use those discretionary … ((C06 interrupts)).

C06

... mm?

MF

Not really?

C06

Not really, even if the customer feel unhappy [MF: yep] I will tell them, sorry, sir or madam [MF: yep] cause if you thinking if you're working in the company as well [MF: yep] so all the company has the policy [MF: yep] if, if I, if you, you just considering you are my job, so the, if there's no rule for all the jobs so [MF: yep] how can you arrange your company [MF: yeah] so basically I tell them follow the policy is more [MF: OK.] more important for me.

MF

OK., no worries. um in a few words, could you describe to me um your sales technique, so actually we talked about that one already, so you look, you listen to client um you look to make sure that the cross-selling applies to what the client needs, so, that's fine, I won't ask that question again, they're all, all these questions they're repetitive so ... ((C06 interrupts)).

C06

... very similar ... ((MF continues)).

MF

... very very similar ((flipping through pages)) um I know about that one already ((flipping through pages)) OK. So at the moment um your first language is Mandarin or Cantonese?

C06

ur Mandarin.

MF

Mandarin.

C06

Yep.

MF

I used to manage Hay Market. Do you know where the AFSO at Hay Market is?

C06

Oh, yes, really big.

MF

I used to manage that place.

C06

Oh, is it?

MF

Yet, I don't speak a word of Mandarin or Cantonese, so had a lot of staff that used to interpret for me, but you might um have you ever had to deal with clients from Korea, OK. obviously Koreans speak Korean, and obviously it's nothing like Mandarin or Cantonese, you have had to deal with any of those clients before, that their their first language doesn't, you know be English or or Chinese?

C06

Always [MF: yep] Korean people I have quite a lot of customers …

MF

Yeah, I know, I know there are quite a lot of Korean students so [C06: yeah] over there um how do you, how do you approach a client, like obviously your your first language is obviously Chinese [C06: yep] how do you approach a person like this from Korea, how do you help them get what they need? How do you do that?

C06

ur actually when you sel- when I was at the AFSO, all the bank actually, we got the brochures [MF: yep] so brochures is with, it's a good aid for us for me [MF: yep] so, when you explain the product to the customer [MF: yep] or catalogue, everything, I show them, so point out, and ur write down the notes for them [MF: yep] so make them to, like easily to understand all the information [MF: yep] so I can cross the important thing, for example the call rate [MF: yep] how much for half minute [MF: yep] I cross out for them [MF: yep]   so make them understand that [MF: OK.] yeah

and ur follow the Korean people, they quite like the LG handset [MF: yep] so … ((MF interrupts)).

MF

... so LG still do that.

C06

LG, Samsung, they're crazy of that.

MF

ur alright, so a lot of the time, it's a lot of, getting the brochure, circling, you you you … ((C06 interrupts)).

C06

yeah, explaining to them, circling, and ur, ur if they, they, they still can't understand [MF: yep] ask them to keep the brochure [MF: yep] you can read when you going home ((MF coughs)) you don't need to be in a hurry today [MF: yep] so if you can't really understand [MF: yep] I can give you my name card [MF: yep] my phone number is here [MF: yep] so if you have any home, contact with me, I can explain to you again.

MF

OK. um can you describe a situation, where you had to hold your tongue, or not act in a certain way, even though you felt your opinion was a correct one? so, say that client coming up you know the other day, and say, you know Three's trying to rip me off ur you know that Three's a reputable company and all that sort of thing, um have you, have you ever had a situation where you just go, you know what, this customer is lying or or or telling you know the wrong thing, have you ever felt that, have you ever had the situation where you actually had to hold your tongue and not say anything?

C06

Yes, I have [MF: yeah?] yep but I still try to help them out [MF: yep] when they come in, they, I know they're lying [MF: yep] but I will try to find out the facts [MF: yep] from them [MF: yep] so for example, so and so, I got, yeah Sir, do you have any evidence? [MF: yep] can you bring your bill here? [MF: yep] so I can explain all the details for you [MF: yep] because actually all your spend is on your bill, so is that possible for you to bring one bill to me [MF: yeah, yeah] I can explain it, or in another way, I can contact with you is customer care [MF: sure] to verify all the information for you.

MF

Yep, aha, so you just go back to the facts and … ((C06 interrupts)).

C06

yeah, always go back to the facts, and try to find the evidence.

MF

That's a good point. um ((slight pause)) describe, like time management these days, everyone says they're time poor, OK. um it's a term we we like to use at the moment, I don't have even time, what do you think the best way to manage time is?

C06

ur for me the best way to manage time is like, is to make a daily plan [MF: yep] everyday [MF: yep] so do you know what you're gonna do for today [MF: yep] yeah cause for me currently it's, you you see I living in Hurstville [MF: yep] and I'm working in North Ryde but it's ... ((MF interrupts)).

C06

... it's a long ... really long trip everyday [MF: yeah] so, I can do some planning, on the on the bus [MF: yep] in the train [MF: yep] and reading some information about my customer [MF: OK.] or something [MF: yep] during this travelling period ((slight laugh)) [MF: OK.] and ur I go there I can prepare everything [MF: yep] yeah so they, making a plan, setting your goals, is really important for me.

MF

yep, OK. um ((flicking through pages)) I pretty much asked all the, the role play questions um is there any questions you've got for me at the moment, about the role or any other questions that you like to actually ask at the moment?

C06

ur yes, please, I'm applying for the customer service job in here?

MF

yep.

C06

yeah, like, what kind of, like, what kind of responsibility and to have about the banking [MF: OK.] I think I need to have stronger like work ethics about this job.

MF

yeah?

C06

yeah.

MF

I think, what, what you talked about from Three's reputation as well, I mean, it's all about brand, so obviously we go out there representing the AFSO everyday, and I think [C06: yeah] your philosophies are around you know on representing Three, it's very very similar, like we've got a thousand branches, I don't know how many stores Three's got, but you're representing one company, so that the customer needs to see a unified brand, ur in that particular place, so yeah, that that's probably very very important ur professional standards [C06: yeah]. The role pretty much handles cash, OK.?

C06

OK.

MF

So similar to your ur your Hungry Ja- your Hungry Jacks job [C06: yep] um where you know a lot of it is processing cash transactions [C06: yep] um looking for clients' needs, um obviously you know with the immediate sale of Hungry Jacks, you try to up-sell or you know or upsize or whatever, put a dessert in there as well if you can ((C06 little laugh)) ur and it's all immediate sales, and if the food quality and the services is great, you know they'll be back within a week, OK. or they could be a daily customer, but you know, majority of the time you you you you know that you've provided good enough service to return in a week um what we do here is obviously we've got customers, we're attracting customers and we're looking to, you know, see if we can get additional services for those clients [C06: yep] um to make sure that they're happy with us and they stay loyal clients, the longer you've got a customer, just like Three, the longer you people are in a contract and go past the contract date, um and then they renew that contract for that period [C06: yeah] obviously you know you're making more money as long as the client is staying and spending money with you so it's exactly the same thing [C06: ah] it's yeah it's up to us to make sure that we've, our clients ur have got everything they, they need ur and that's the responsibility to obviously talk to the client, say, look, you've got a need here, what I'll do is I'll go and take you around to one of our specialists ur and they can talk to you a little bit more about that particular role [C06: OK.] OK. so [C06: yep]. The main role is processing transactions with accuracy um identify sales opportunities [C06: yep] in the role, so it's it's actually ur it's it's got, like, it's a fast pace role [C06: yeah] there's a lot to learn in banking, as obviously as there is much as there is in phone contracts and things like that, and products you gotta know you know what that Nokia does, what the LG does, and what the Samsung does [C06: yeah] obviously we've got AAA ((name of daily savings account)), credit cards, term deposits [C06: yeah] very very similar, OK.?

C06

OK.

MF

The thing is, it's all about making sure, that the client stays um you know for a long time, and that's what it is, so you do that two ways, you've got a good product, great service generally does as a rule, OK.? [C06: yeah] so that's what it really comes down to. Any other questions that you've got at all?

C06

ur just in, like for example, if I got this job ... ((MF interrupts)).

MF

... Yes? ... ((C06 continues)).

C06

... for this position [MF: yep] so how long is like the, notice [MF: OK.] to my employer?

MF

Well, it depends on what your current employer requires. I mean if they give, you know, say you can go within a week, well, then, we take you within a week, so there's no requirement from our end, it's more yours [C06: OK.] ur so yeah basically we won't be sitting there, worried about that too much at all, OK. [C06: OK.] so, um but their front we want to do the right thing by your current employer, ur obviously you're a casual, you're not required to give two months notice at all, but if you like the employer, I'm sure you'd want to give them a bit of notice that you're [C06: yeah] you're walking out of the door, I think that's the right thing to do [C06: yeah] yeah so ur but yeah like that would be entirely up to you on negotiation with your employer, so does that make any sense? yep?

C06

yeah.

MF

Any other questions you've got for me at all?

C06

Sounds really really, I'm exciting with this kind of job ((little laughs)) yeah [MF: yeah] in my ... ((MF interrupts)).

MF

... It's, it's a tough environment, um you know, banking is a competitive envi-environment um [C06: yeah] with lots of challenges, lots of competition, as you said you bank with Bank West at the moment, um and there's there's a lot of um there's competition it is it is quite fierce um you know basically at the end of the day, a lot of it is pricing, but you know you can go into CB, and if their service was ordinary, and you're with somebody else, you might go, look you know what, you might you might be cheaper, but I don't really have faith in what you are doing OK. [C06: yeah] versus um we we we provide pretty good product at a very good price here um we know we're not the cheapest, we know we're not the dearest, OK., but the, the support structure, our service focus um is basically the difference between you know providing excellent services and and and getting a lot of business out of it, and providing poor services and … ((C06 interrupts)).

C06

yeah, I can find out about AFSO because when the students get the, get the handset, we need 100 point ID [M: yep] so, they provide me the bank statement [MF: yep] I can find out AFSO staff really good, they offer them the XXX ((name of savings account) [MF: yep] and also offer them the YYY ((name of another savings account [MF: that's right] yeah so two account together [MF: yep] it's like, also up-selling, right? [MF: yep] everything really up-selling as well.

MF

yep, a lot of students, we've also got to think what the student pay, so obviously if you're a full time students, you get student exemptions on your account ur we offer credit card with no cost as well, so you you know that's basically so, the client walks out of the Macquarie Shopping Centre branch [C06: OK.] you know you expect them to probably a XXX account to put the money in, some overseas students actually get money in, so we might set [C06: yeah] them up with a term deposit, and get them a bit of extra interest as well at the same time, maybe a YYY to save some money, and ur maybe a credit card so that they can actually function [C06: yeah] cause a lot of the time you actually need a credit card to function.

C06

It's quite handy, also like our purchasing, you need to use a credit card.

MF

yeah, that's right.

C06

yeah, before it was a restriction, students can't take it.

MF

yeah there are some concessions where we can do that, so yeah that's what it is, but then again it's maintaining that relationship, so, once you've got the relationship, you still need to service it [C06: yep] and if your service is wrong [C06: yeah] you're not going to get the most out of it.

C06

yeah, especially for banking, a com- being a customer, can't like, like tell them the wrong information [M: yep] ( )

MF

So anything else you would like to ask at all?

C06

ur it's fine.

MF

It's fine?

C06

Yeah.

MF

Alright.

C06

It's really nice to talk with you ((laughs)).

MF

Nah, it's alright, thank you very much for coming in today, all we've got to do now, as I said, I think I've actually asked all the questions and collated that so I'll just go and grab ur Choon and just let her know that she can turn off the microphone [C06: sure, yep] and I'll do the same with the handsets [C06: sure] I'll say, 'Goodbye, handset' ((C06 laughs)).

End of tape (36 minutes 16 seconds)

(b) Transcript of researcher debrief with interviewer, MF

R

So, I actually have a transcript of the interview that took place. Is that still quite clear in your mind? Would you like to review this?

MF

It's fairly clear actually.

R

So I'll just leave that. My research questions are standardised so that I am collecting the same data. So I will be asking the questions in a set way. First of all some background information. Which is your country of birth?

MF

Australia.

R

From birth to about the age of 20, in which country did you spend most time in?

MF

Australia.

R

Do you consider yourself a White Anglo Australian?

MF

Not really.

R

No, what do you consider yourself?

MF

Just ordinary Australian.

R

Ordinary Australian. What do you think is the race, ethnicity and nationality of C06?

MF

Chinese and I think it was Hong Kong Chinese.

R

And nationality?

MF

Chinese.

R

What accent did she have?

MF

Not much, not much, she speaks quite clearly actually. There was a tiny bit of, I think she was pretty clear on the day, there was a Chinese accent there, yeah.

R

Have you lived an extended period of time outside of Australia?

MF

The most I've lived outside is about three and a half months and I lived in Europe in that time.

R

Have you ever had any training in cross-culture communication?

MF

No.

R

That's great. So that's the boring bit aside. Now about your interview experience. When you left the interview the other day, how did you feel it went?

MF

I feel I was rushed, and it's only because I generally don't follow the scripting too much but on the day of the exercise, I generally follow my scripting so a lot of it is like asking same question over and over again. I felt pretty rush actually so that's the biggest problem I faced.

R

Anything else apart from that?

MF

No, it was a normal interview, other than that.

R

When you read the candidate's application including the resume, what went through your mind?

MF

Before speaking with her I thought obviously with her background there's some potential from that particular piece. And that was probably about it.

R

What was it about her background?

MF

The fact that she has worked in retail before. That's what probably, the first thing I look for is, like in this environment here, it's retail. So if somebody's got back office work experience all their life, it's not going to help me too much at all, so the first thing when I look at people's resume, the first thing I look at is, where they work before.

R

So that was an attraction for you.

MF

Yep.

R

Anything else?

MF

That was about it.

R

What expectations, questions, concerns did you have about the application?

MF

Not many. I've seen people write really glowing applications and they turn out terrible in the interviews so, I try not to get too wrapped up in the applications and I like to see what people can produce in front of me.

R

So just take it as it comes.

MF

That's right.

R

Any concerns before you actually conducted that particular interview?

MF

No, probably pretty nervous due to the process, so getting taped. I was probably a little bit anxious at the time, because just getting taped I think is quite a weird experience.

R

Not something you've done before.

MF

Yeah.

R

What did you expect to happen at the interview?

MF

To be honest I didn't know. I expected a little, put a good case forward for the job, and that's pretty much all I expected. I didn't sort of expect too much other than I knew that she'd turned out prepared and ready to go.

R

So you expect her to be prepared.

MF

Absolutely.

R

Anything else. What preparation did you make for the interview?

MF

Not enough. I think I was on the back foot the whole time. I think for my part, I generally am a lot more prepared than what I was, so from that part, by the time I went to the room I was ready to go, I felt I was missing something. And I really don't know what it was, I really don't.

R

You're on the back foot.

MF

I was on the back foot. My day was pretty crazy and by the time, because in the afternoon when we did the interview, so that part of it was really really, it's like, you're almost thinking I got to get this, this and this done, and then I've got the interview, and then I was already thinking what's happening at five and six o'clock, at night already. Shouldn't have done that.

R

So you had a very tight day.

MF

It was a very tight day.

R

If you had time to prepare for the interview which you normally do, what would those preparation be?

MF

Generally I write down additional questions I want to ask, so if there's anything in the resume that doesn't make sense, like somebody's had ten jobs in three years, that's when I start asking questions. So I look at certain things that would concern me and obviously there's always an answer for those concerns so those things I probably want to get cleared up very very quickly, so a lot of work is done around specific questions I want to actually ask. Other than that, that would probably be the main thing. I didn't have the specific questions ready to go. I looked at the resume, I saw retail background, but I didn't do my usual indepth sort of quick screen. What looks right, what doesn't look right, and then really hammer away with those particular aspects.

R

You normally spend more time on a resume.

MF

Yeah.

R

Any other preparation that you would have done apart from analysing the resume a bit more if you had time?

MF

No.

R

What was your first impression of the candidate at the interview?

MF

Pleasant. Intelligent. Almost over qualified.

R

In what way?

MF

Well, she was doing uni, and obviously her qualifications in the long term wouldn't be suitable to a retail environment.   You wouldn't spend that much money in education to apply for bank telling job.

R

So you normally do not recruit graduates?

MF

I do. It depends on their degrees. That was my initial thought. I thought she's a very smart girl and on the intellectual level I'm sure she got a very very high I.Q. So what's her motivation for down the track I think that's when you really start asking questions. My job pays here is about 38,000 a year for a start. Her education background she'd probably be demanding probably about 70 to 75 thousand out in the market if she used her skills. So sometimes we try to understand the reason people are coming into the retail front to then get into the other part of the bank and that's what I've got to be mindful of because if I spend up to 50,000 in the first six months not only in education, training, and salaries to get this person up to speed, and then they walk out in six months, I've got a problem. Very costly. So that's probably one of the things, just looking at the background, and I'm thinking, OK. working in retail at the moment, doing education for this, she's really going to be focusing on the education piece, how long am I going to get her for, and what value is it for both of us.

R

And how long do you generally like people to stay in your role?

MF

At least 12 months.

R

To get value out of it.

MF

Otherwise it's a waste, because for the first six months, they are not producing any productivity that's any value, which really sounds bad, but that's what I've experienced.

R

First six months is an investment in your staff, and then they start to add value.

MF

Yep, so it's one of the things I do look at very heavily.

R

So, basically over qualified.

MF

Yes.

R

Any other concerns?

MF

No. As I said, when I got out of there, her priority was her career, so I think that's what probably at the end of the day when I was going through, gee she's a very smart girl, why are you applying for a retail job in a bank when your priorities are around your career.

R

Not quite a good match in terms of …

MF

As I said, you automatically think coming through the door, then you get what you want, and that means that I invest, the bank wins at the end of the day, but I lose.

R

What do you think was the role of the candidate at the interview?

MF

Her role is to sell herself. That's it. Get ready to say, you know what, if you employ me, I'll make sure that I'll do the best for you every day. That's her job. That's it. Be open, honest, and really show me what she's got, and why she wants the job.

R

And what would she have to tell you to actually prove that to you?

MF

It's not what she says here, it's what she does. So you read the body language more than anything.

R

What did you read in her body language?

MF

She was quite confident. She had an interest in what was on offer. Just a bit of doubt around how much time she wanted to spend in her role before she got what she wanted. That part was probably quite obvious, but as you said I think she was quite engaged to, compared to what she was doing at the moment, at Macquarie Shopping Centre, I think this will probably be more of an attractive offer to work while she study, going forward.

R

What did you expect her to do at the interview, you said to sell herself, but how did you expect her to behave?

MF

Being enthusiastic without being over enthusiastic. Asking a lot of, asking clarifying questions, that would have been important. Most people don't know what happens on this side of the counter, so probably even asking some more questions around that, what actually is the retail front all about. Sometimes people do ask a lot of questions, which is great, because then they know what they're getting in for. Then some don't and then, when they get in, we have problems down the track. We hire the wrong people. I think that's important, asking lots of questions. But they gotta show that they really want the job, and sometimes it can be said even most of the time it is what they do, you can see in their body language whether or not they want to be there.

R

So an interest in staying in the job, and asking good questions, understanding the job a bit more. What else do you expect them to do?

MF

Just be honest.

R

Be honest, alright. What did you think the candidate expected of you?

MF

Some people think they're going to go through 50 questions from hell, other people expected a conversation, other people, some people just don't know what to expect. I think until people people walk in and first meet you in a handshake, that's when they create that feeling of what they are about to go through. I think up until that particular point she probably got thoughts before she walked in through the door. But I think when she first meets me, that's when her perceptions will change immediately around what's about to happen. I think she expected that I was probably going to follow a process, I think that's what she probably expected which basically means that the AFSO interviewing process, I think, probably going to ask some tough questions as well. That's all I can contribute, it's hard to talk about the perceptions of others, really.

R

It's whatever you think it is. There's no right or wrong answers. What do you think is your role at the interview?

MF

Make the person comfortable. Make them comfortable and get better answers. If you make somebody comfortable in the interview and then they start to relax, people start

to answer the questions a lot more openly and honestly, instead of actually saying hang on, I've got people in an interview, OK., this question I'll answer this way, you can almost see that it's scripted, so what I do is I try and get people relaxed, ask them questions that they are not sort of expecting, make them easy ones and then start building up to a tempo of getting the hard questions in.

R

You want the real answers rather than the prepared answers.

MF

That's right.

R

So get good answers, make them comfortable, anything else about your role in your particular interview?

MF

No. I think that's about it.

R

What do you think is the purpose of the job interview?

MF

The main purpose, I think it's for me more than anything. I think it's for me to identify exactly how that person, based on everything they do at the interview, how are they going to fit. I think the role is like you can do a computer test that tells me 99 percent suitable to banking but the face to face bit tells me exactly about that person and whether or not they're going to fit in to the team and how they're going to actually behave in the team as well. So I think it's more of the behavioural piece that's actually saying the fact that, I've had people turn up in jeans for interview, it tells how professional they are, nothing worse than that, people turning up that way, I think that's pretty much what it's about, that it's more for me.

R

To see if they fit.

MF

Yes.

R

Anything else apart from assessing their fit?

MF

The interview was an opportunity to ask some tough questions.

R

What were some of the questions that you asked that you thought were tough questions?

MF

I didn't really ask. I normally do ask a lot and I generally keep, I generally do is "tell me a little bit about yourself", and some people start at the age of three and some people start at the age of 20. So some start from H.S.C. and go on from there, so what I generally do at that particular point is I listen for key things around that period and then I just go hey and I just look at key words, like what you are doing with me, look for key words, and you just pick your way at those and that's not in any questionnaire.

R

So you try to drill down.

MF

Like I was studying this at school and what did you study that for? What was the motivating factor for doing that? Did you actually enjoy it? After you did enjoy it, what were the reasons why you didn't pursue a career in that field. So that's got nothing written in here. Sometimes I look for those things, cause when you're at work there's a lot about how passionate you are about what you are doing. You generally find that people are driven by what they enjoy. But I also want to know because sometimes it tells you if you've got a life outside of work as well. It's people who balance their life and work, are generally better employees as well. So who have a really good solid balance if they have too much on work and not enough on outside, they are very very robotic, and the ones that got a balance, but then we've got some people who are too balance outside and not enough so.

R

You're looking for effective balance, by the sound of it.

MF

Absolutely.

R

So these are things that are not in your procedure.

MF

That's right.

R

What else are you looking for?

MF

That is probably about it. You want to know about the person. Not so you want to know everything, but you want to know what they stand for, and that's not to say who they vote for in politics or anything like that, which religion they're brought up in, but just about them, that's what I really want to know. What drives them?

R

So the fit, the drive, a balance life.

MF

Absolutely.

R

Anything else?

MF

Nope.

R

Did the interview achieve its purpose?

MF

Yeah, I think it did.

R

In what way?

MF

Probably answers some questions about when she was at, and obviously the fit. I think it did answer more questions on the day. She was quite open about her answers so I don't think she was too well guarded. I think she was enough to come out and answer, she answered those.

R

Honest.

MF

Yeah, so I think I saw most of her on the day.

R

And so did she succeed with you?

MF

I did go back and sort of say that at a particular time, probably not, she would be more suited probably pursuing what she's got in her degree. And I think that probably be the most important thing, is to focus on, if you're going to spend that much money doing the study, if the AFSO's got any job in that particular area, that's where I suggest she goes to. If you come through the retail arm, what happens too is, it's a bit of stigma, and that stigma is, well you worked in branches, what would you know about, even though you got a degree, you sort of almost got to be able to network. So, part of me was sort of saying, what probably answered for me the most was, it was a foot in the door to pursue her interest. And I don' know, since I've been here for six months, I probably helped move people on, probably about fifteen staff in the last six months because they've been employed wrongly. One became a policeman. He was doing law. He's been a policeman. So we've just lost 12 months experience out of the door. We train somebody up and then release them. I've got somebody else who's more into acting. So why would I hire an actor for, you know what I mean? So I don't get it. You know just fill bumps on seats you know. There is another person who was

522

studying accounting and obviously now works for the finance department for the bank. Now we spent 13 months training that person. So it just leaves gaps in your business. And what we're looking to do is to move the staff across the telling over the customer service and then pursue specialists role inside the organization that relate to retail. That's what I am looking for.

R

Someone who will progress through, rather than a step in the door and then on to something else.

MF

That's right. I generally had a feel, whether I am right or wrong, that's how I came out of the interview saying well, how much investment time am I going to put in, and what's in it for me, I gotta say it like this. I've got 55 staff here, I'm going to invest some time you know, we want a bit back in return. That's what, I left that interview, just feeling a little bit like that.

R

Yeah, she's not going to be here long enough.

MF

Yeah. I think her study is not too far away from finishing, off the top of my head. I would encourage her to go through the bank's channels and I did actually provide feedback to HR and that's what I generally do. I go to HR, get on the phone and say look HR, this person is more suitable to this, can you put that resume over to ((name of particular part of the bank)) or put that resume over to that, so I don't say, like my feedback goes back to HR. I sort of saying this is sort of really suitable for, please put that resume in front of this person, get an interview.

R

So you try and guide that person along as well.

MF

Absolutely. If they have taken enough time just to put in an interview, like to put a resume to the AFSO, which basically mean they like what the AFSO stands for just, because my job is not the best. It could be ((name of particular part of the bank)), it could be H.R. it could be ((name of particular part of the bank)), it could be a number of different areas. It could be ((name of particular part of the bank)), but let's see what we can do it.

R

So you think in terms of the bank rather than in terms of your branch.

MF

Absolutely.

R

So there are obviously some qualities there.

MF

No, I didn't close the door.

R

So it sounds to me like the decisions you made for the positions applied for really is the lack of fit there?

MF

mm.

R

How would you describe the way she communicated with you?

MF

She's pretty good. I don't think she misunderstood what I was trying to say. The answers were coming back answering the questions. Some of it are a bit short, but I think she answered the questions the best she could.

R

She understood and she answered.

MF

I think so.

R

Anything else, any other way you might describe her?

MF

I can understand her quite clearly, it helped me lead on to the next question. Not a problem.

You know I worked at Haymarket branch, 12 months down there. I think before I managed Haymarket, I think my understanding of the Chinese culture was non existent. So having work down there for 12 months, and it took me about six months to get used to how things worked, I think that was probably the best investment in my time, was to send me down to Haymarket, so by the end of 12 months, the staff always had a little word that they used to say, it's like their little way of having a go at me, and they say 'you understand?' cause when I was talking to them, that's the way I communicated. I say look this is how we're going to do this blah blah blah blah blah and I said 'Now do you understand?' So that became the catch phrase of the branch. It was like MF always says 'Do you understand?' It was a bit of fun for me you know. I struggled down there for the first three months for sure.

R

May I ask a little bit more about that struggle?

MF

I just couldn't fathom, when you walk into a business role wearing the manager's badge, people thought that because they've been there for eight to ten years and they knew the Chinese community down there, that they couldn't take instructions from management. And there was a pecking order which I didn't actually understand for a little bit where, if you were the oldest in that particular part, you needn't be the smartest or if you got the most sales or whatever, but you're in the pecking order, and they created their own pecking order, where the oldest and the most respected would be deemed like a leader, but even though in my eyes they had no leadership role. So it was quite weird.

R

Because you were not the oldest.

MF

It wasn't about me. It was about how they set up unofficially the way this, in certain cultures, the head of the family is the head of the family. They had this unofficial pecking order.

R

Based on age.

MF

Yeah, it was really weird, and based on family as well. Like how rich your family was. I don't know if it was normal, but I busted it up, because I didn't think it was healthy.

R

Was that respect for the oldest person, is the oldest person necessarily in the more senior role?

MF

No. They're all in the same grade.

R

Same grade and it's an age thing. And you busted that. What do you mean by that?

MF

Well, I just went and actually told, people who were supposedly in the second, third and fourth in the pecking order, how important they were to the business. Anyway, to break this culture of pecking orders and all that sort of stuff, and for me to take a bit more control over the branch, was to say, 'Right, you are a ((a specific level of the job)), you are important to this business'. I don't care about this unofficial pecking order, I just told them 'Look, to my knowledge, I've just got some information to say there's an unofficial pecking order here at the moment that you guys have created, and I don't believe in it. You are as important as that person to me and that's what you need to know'.

R

Now you spoke to the second and third tier. What about the top ones?

MF

Trouble maker.

R

Did you have a conversation with them too?

MF

Yep.

R

And what sort of reception did you get out of that exercise?

MF

Number 1, didn't cope too well with me telling her that her pecking order was going to be taken down. So I said 'Look, we're all equals here. I am the leader in this business, but I don't see myself any more important than what you are, but I don't expect that this unofficial pecking order is going to stay. You're telling my staff how to operate. They listen to me. They don't listen to you. I write their PFAR for them. You don't write their PFAR for them'.

R

Write their what?

MF

Performance, Feedback and Review. So that person, she got sacked from the bank because obviously there were other things that she was doing that weren't right, so obviously it was a bit weird. That was probably the hardest thing and what people told me down there was that that's the way the culture operates. It's based on family seniority, how wealthy your family is, which part you came from, it's almost like the English class system. So I created an environment down there where everyone was equal. So I don't care if you've been in the bank six months, or you've been in the bank 20 years.

R

What was the outcome of that exercise?

MF

Well, I got hugged from everybody when I left the branch. I've never seen so many people, I've never seen a farewell where everybody wanted to speak and say something. And some people got up and say you know you're the hardest person we've ever worked for but we're glad you turned up.

R

These are all Chinese staff?

MF

Yes. So they taught me hell of a lot about culture, how you can have yam-cha for breakfast. Spring rolls for breakfast is something you just get used to it. They taught me a lot around how things operate. They told me how things operate in Chinatown. And it's not what you think it is. It's very deceptive. Once they started to trust me and realise that I wasn't going anywhere and I was very very supportive for them, then people started sharing some stuff with me. I had some people down there who are very very powerful. In the political world and everything and they say 'M, look, your reputation out there is that you're tough but you're fair'. I said, well I can live with that. That was the community.

R

And you got the feedback from the staff.

MF

Yep. So up until that particular point there, it took me five months to get that feedback. But I didn't actually ask for it. So for the language piece, I brought C ((name of staff)) up here, I brought one of the staff up here with me, just people that I trust.

R

What you are saying has some relevance, probably have some pretty significant relevance to what I am trying to do, but it is outside the sphere of the job interview. Maybe at some stage I'll come back to you, if it is OK.? But right now I'm going to pull you back to the interview experience because it's really really relevant. How do you yourself like to communicate?

MF

I hate emails. So verbally, phone or face to face. Preferably face to face so I can read people.

R

Alright. Anything else. Any other way of describing how you like to communicate.

MF

I don't like to talk too much. I'd rather them talk. Depends on, the more the other person talks the more I can get the other information out of it, so I'd rather they talk more.

R

How would you describe your style of communicating?

MF

Open questions. That will be it. Very strong eye contact. It's none threatening, it's actually engaging. I generally try and steer people so that I can fully engage with them.

R

So you connected.

MF

Absolutely.

R

What were the important things that you wanted to communicate in an interview?

MF

Just around the focus of what we're trying to achieve here. When people actually get interviewed, it is a job that I want people to have fun. So if I can get that message across to people that it's not a brick wall sort of job or customer walks in, impress them and all that sort of thing. I want people to see that we do have a bit of fun here as well. It's a fun place to work. It's not actually a bank. It's a place where people come and enjoy themselves every day. That's what I want them to see. But also there is a serious side to it as well, which is heavily focused around customers. And obviously the second part is we've got to make money or else we won't have a job. So that's probably the second piece, showing how important it is around the sales piece as well.

R

OK. Anything else?

MF

No.

R

Did you communicate those things?

MF

Not as well as I'd probably liked. Just based on memory, that's three weeks ago now, so I sort of say little bit but not enough.

R

Not enough more of the fun bit or the business side of things?

MF

Probably the business. There is a sheet that we generally read out, which goes through all the inherent requirements of the job, and I couldn't find it. So I didn't go through it. I ran over things very quickly. I think there were some stuff I missed there, for sure.

R

How long is the interview generally?

MF

How long would I like to do it for? About half an hour. If you go to these questionnaire, you gonna go over time because for the first fifteen minutes you 're filling out paper work, which means that leaves you fifteen minutes. So I want paper work done in about five to six minutes, 25 minutes for questioning, and that's it. And

if I can't work out in 25 minutes whether or not they're going to make it or not, well then I'm no good at what I do.

R

More time isn't going to help.

MF

No.

R

How did you feel about the questions that the candidate asked. I mean she didn't ask a lot of questions, just towards the very end. You asked her, have you have any questions for me and she said "Look, I am applying for this customer service role, what kind of responsibility do I have about the bank. And the other question she asked was I think was the notice period.

MF

They are relevant questions I think. She might have been a little bit rehearsed about what actually happened. I'm sure she knows somebody who works for the AFSO. You generally have a feel, I don't know, I reckon she probably knows somebody who works in the AFSO in the retail environment and might have given her a bit of information. People who have a bit of knowledge don't actually, they ask , 'so what's the job really about'.

R

So she didn't ask those questions.

MF

My assumption is that she knows about the job.

R

How would you rate her confidence level in communicating with you during that particular interview? Zero to ten , bad to good.

MF

Good, seven to eight.

R

What could have been done to improve that rating?

MF

Probably be a little bit more descriptive around the answers to the questions. So there were some specific questions I think I asked, like 'Give me an example of something that you've actually done' and those questions I didn't get specific answers on some of them. Now I don't remember which questions they were, like, Can you give me an example where you used fact-finding skills to get information from a client? She talked about how she does it but she didn't give me a specific example of where she's done. She knows what's the requirement of the company that she works for, obviously

like, the way you have to deal with the clients, but I didn't get a specific example. So it's probably one of the things. There was a couple of times when I got the company policy and didn't get specifically what C06 had done.

R

So she was being more general in her answers. Anything else that she could have done to improve her rating?

MF

That would have done it for me. To give me some relevant interactions with the customers. Tell me how she actually processes things. We can teach processes, but what's actually going through the mind. I can tell you all the processes here at the AFSO, but if you say, you throw something at me left field, well, then my mind will go into solution mode. So that's what I was looking for, is to see her process skills.

R

How would you rate your own confidence level in communicating with her?

MF

I was comfortable.

R

Give yourself a rating.

MF

In that interview, it wasn't my best, to be honest. But I would still give an eight on that day.

R

What would you have done to make it better?

MF

In the preparation, as I said. I was running around like my head was chopped off before, and I think that was probably seen.

R

Preparation would have done it for you.

MF

Just not having three crises before you guys turned up, and when I looked at the crises that were thrown at me, they needn't need to turn up at my desk. I should not let that affect what I'm about to do next. That's probably the biggest thing.

R

Something a little out of control.

MF

Yeah.

R

What stood out for you about the interview?

MF

I've done so many, I don't know.

R

Was there anything said or done that surprised you?

MF

Not really. I wouldn't say, some I really remember, because of some crazy stuff happened in there. Nothing that I'll sit back and say, I suppose, you're going to remember it if this has a wow factor in it. Did this have the wow factor for me? Nope.

R

Would you consider that interview easy or hard?

MF

It was easy.

R

What helped it?

MF

Just my experience. I can do it without the sheets anyway. I know what I want in an interview and I know what works, and I know how to hire the right people. My turnover rates are quite low, so I must seem to be OK. I've got a technique that works.

R

You've got the experience and you've got an effective way of interviewing.

MF

mm.

R

Now one of the things I wanted was pictures that might just help explain your experience in that interview. I don't suppose you have any pictures. Any pictures at all? I've actually brought some, if you haven't got any. If you flip through, I put a random sample of pictures, 50 there, people take about 2, 3 some of them take 5, 10 minutes, up to you, if you just want to flip through and as you flip through you might say, gee that reminded me of that interview experience because.

MF

OK. Definitely not, definitely not, that one.

R

Picture 6.

MF

This is smart technology, so from what I was dealing, I was dealing with a very smart person, that was probably very technology savvy as well. I generally pick up very quickly, people are tech-savvy or they're not. So I reckon she'll be very skilled up on just about everything.

R

Is that important to you?

MF

No, not really. You can teach people to turn on computers.

R

So try and focus on your experience, your thoughts, your feelings about that interview.

MF

Just try and understand these signs, because it means that everything is going everywhere.

R

That's Picture 15.

MF

I don't know why, this could probably relate a little bit. I think this comes down to experiences. I felt that the candidate probably experienced a little but probably not a lot, like the outside world, if that makes sense. That's probably the best way to describe it. From an interviewing point, I think she seems a little bit at the time. As in well rounded, probably still explore a little bit more. I think 21, when people sit like that they're quite comfortable. I don't think she was too guarded at all. I think that's a comfortable thing, it's when people do this ((crossed arm across chest)) they're closed up. She was quite relaxed.

R

She didn't cross her arms.

MF

No. Generally when people do that I generally start asking tougher questions or if they really are crossing hard to the point that, you pull back, get them relaxed again so that they can interview, some people you probably get a touch point. She was pretty relaxed. That's a relaxing grip on the finger. It's not tired, it's not like that ((hard hand grip)). Picture 37, because this is quite a prestige building. And it is similar to this one here. The aura when people walk in, they go "wow". Sometimes it can be overwhelming for people, so potentially that could have been an overwhelming factor interviewing in this building. This one is interesting.

R

49?

MF

Yeah. I really don't know who I'm going to be talking to a lot of the time before people walk in. So there's different people in different backgrounds, different job sets. I can expect anybody walking in the door. I try not to make assumptions before they

come in. A lot of the time just because they do facials doesn't mean that they can't be a good banker either. I've had people change their careers on a regular basis.

R

OK., really keeping an open mind.

MF

Yeah.

R

How do you feel about interviewing someone from another culture?

MF

Normal.

R

Normal?

MF

Australia is very multicultural. I've had over 50 cultures work for me over the years, from Russian to German to Chinese, Hong Kong, Thailand, Iceland,

R

So for you it's a normal experience.

MF

It's an opportunity.

R

Were there instances in the interview that you thought were cultural?

MF

No.

R

So nothing that was challenging in that regard? Research tells us that cultural values such as the different ways of respecting superiors, we talked a little bit about that, they can influence your experience in a job interview. Do you feel that this has impacted you on your experience?

MF

No, not really. I honestly don't think so. She knew I was the boss, so obviously the impression had to get sorted by me. I think she understood where she was at, she knows her place.

R

Research also tells us that work values for people from different culture.   What are some work values that are important to you?

MF

Honesty, integrity, challenge yourself, people being curious, every day about what they can do, not what they can't do. The work day, the most important to me is, where

you are today, you should never be satisfied. I need people that continually challenge themselves so they can develop. That's it. I hate people that are stagnant. It causes damage to my business. I hate it.

R

Anything else?

MF

Sociable. Not the party animal or anything like that. To be sociable around your group of peers, and in those interactions to be respectful and trusting as well. Those are important qualities.

R

Research also tells us that cultural cues, such as the candidate's race, their accent, their name may influence the interviewer's experience of the job interview. Do you feel this has influenced your experience?

MF

No, not at all.

R

It also tells us that cultural stereotypes can influence the job interview. Do you think this has influenced your experience?

MF

No.

R

How would you describe your culture?

MF

What I stand for? It's probably, I'm relaxed, particularly outside the work, I value friends and family. I think that's probably the most important thing to me. Outside of here, the staff here are my family because I spend more time with these guys here than I probably do with my own family, so I need these guys to be engaged, and I give them an environment where they're in trouble they can open up. We can help out in some ways. At home, it's probably totally opposite. I love spending time with my kids. I like playing cricket with my mates. I wouldn't say that culture, I play cricket, I'm in a cricket team, we're nine out of the 11, so there's two Anglo-Saxon Australians, and nine of the other players are either Lebanese or Indians.

R

And you are one of the Anglo…

MF

Supposedly Anglo- Saxon. They call us 'White boys' which I think is quite funny. They're having a go at us. And I say to Jamie, whatever they want to say, so we just got to learn to speak Indian. He goes yeah, I think we should, so he and I are learning

how to speak Indian at the moment. So that any sledging on the field, because it's all in good humour, we could say back in Indian, so, I don't think I have a culture. I am very relaxed.

R

How would you describe the candidate's culture?

MF

Having worked at Haymarket, you can tell people who have just come to Australia, to bring a lot of traditional values from home. And what actually happens is over the course of time, they learn a different way of doing things. After time, their values and way of living and all that tends to change. Again, I think she's been in Australia for a fair while. I don't think she's been in Australia for five minutes. She's got a couple of Australian colloquialisms, and a couple of little phrases there, I think they're there for sure. I think she's quite rounded in her views. Very open.

R

OK., what do you think culture is?

MF

A way of life. Maybe a belief. This is how things have done. Some people take it to extremes and other people don't take it to extremes, and some are mid range. The ones extremes, generally the people that scare me the most, and that's when they try to force their opinions too strongly. It's important to make sure that you respect somebody's culture. It could be religion, it could be your core value sets. And whether I agree with it or not, I'll still respect it. Unless it's harmful to others, and then I'll bring people up on it, just depends on, a lot of the time .

R

So what are some ways people in an interview from different cultures might behave differently?

MF

You've probably done study around this, but you generally, a lot of core beliefs of individuals happen between the age of zero and six. That's about the time frame. I don't think it's the culture. I think it's the family belief set up a lot of the time. So you can tell whether people come from a strict family or from an engaging family that sort of thing. Generally a lot of time it tells me a little bit about the family that come from more than the culture. Having worked out at Haymarket, I can tell when I'm dealing with somebody who's born in China versus Hong Kong. The traditional Chinese people that have grown up there most of their lives, don't tend to trust governments and authorities, and don't tell us too much information on home loan applications. Only tell you what I need to tell you, and leave it like that. So sometimes you've got to understand where people have come from and what they've experienced. European

block countries that have gone through the cold war, they've experienced, they've lost families in wars, sometimes it's important to understand where people have come from, to actually understand where their beliefs are.

R

And you see those differences in your job interview situations?

MF

Sometimes. Sometimes you can actually see what people believe very very strongly. Sometimes you might ask a question like 'what are you passionate about', 'what are you passions in life' and then people start saying 'I am very very strong in my faith' or some people say 'I love family' and some people say something different. A lot of it comes down to how people are brought up.

R

There might be different level of revelation depending on which country they come from as you were saying.

MF

Yeah. Absolutely. Depends. If you grow up in a dictatorial or you grow up in an environment that has the ability to think and grow, that's what generally tells me.

R

So there might impact on the interview?

MF

For sure. It does. A lot of that stuff is not so much the culture side, it's more what people believe, their core values, there are a lot down the family piece, for sure.

R

Did the interview meet your expectations?

MF

Yes. I got what I wanted out of it.

R

In terms of making your assessment?

MF

Yep.

R

What could have been different about it to make it better for you?

MF

Me. I think that's the main thing. I let myself down by not being as prepared as I normally am. I was a bit annoyed with myself afterwards. I set fairly high expectations and it just makes me stronger for the next interview I do. So I've done three since. I'll be a hell of a lot prepared.

R

What do you think an effective cross-cultural job interview would look like? Think about an interview with a fellow Australian and an interview with a Chinese person. Would you do it exactly the same with both of them? Would you do them differently? How would it be different?

MF

I think it's going to be the same. I don't look at people when they walk in the room and say, ah, you're Aussie, or you're Chinese. I don't look at it that way. You're potentially part of my team coming forward, you know. When I was at Haymarket, obviously I was a little bit, if you want to deem racist, because I wanted Chinese people in the building who can speak Mandarin or Cantonese, so you have to operate that way down there, because your customers demand it.

R

Absolutely. Because your business required it.

MF

Yeah, so, down there, absolutely. Up here, nope. Different, different focus, for sure.

R

What did the outcome of that interview mean to you?

MF

Haven't thought of it that way. I think it was an opportunity to meet a new person.

R

And that has some significance for you?

MF

I like meeting people, that's probably it. I mean I've got a job to do in an interview so, that is a process, I've got to come up with a conclusion at the end, but the main part of every interview is, I get to touch base with somebody new, who is looking to work for me, or work with me.

R

So that's what you meant an opportunity.

MF

Yeah.

R

Did you use the candidate online profile?

MF

No.

R

Is there any question that I have not asked that I should ask? Any comments you would like to make?

MF

No, I think you've asked everything. They're things I'd change for sure. I go back on, pretty hard judge of myself, probably change a few things, and probably dig in to do a bit more probing on some of the things, that I felt were running out of time. So when you're running out of time you speed them up. I think I'm probably guilty of that a little bit as well. It's about how you're going on the day, was it an A minus, I think so, so that's probably what I'd change, give everything to that person. They really need to see me at my best so that they can give me their best. If I give a B game, they will give me a B game.

R

So you set the standard.

MF

Yeah, absolutely.

R

Look, thank you so much. I am so sorry I went overtime.

End of tape (62 minutes 27 seconds)

(c) Transcript of researcher debrief with candidate, C06

R

First of all, thank you for participating in this research. The study is completely independent to your job application and any possible future application to the company, so the intent of my research is to uncover effective communication techniques in the cross-cultural job interview. And to help me do that I just would like to know your experience at your recent interview, particularly with MF. And in participating the research the effective techniques that I will uncover will be given to you later on, in a document called 'Tips for effective cross-cultural interview'. And I thought that you will find them useful for your future. So like the job interview, I'm audio taping this conversation. If you would like me to show you the transcript of the job interview that you had with MF, would you like to have a look at it?

C06

Yeah, it's alright, yeah. So I need to read through or …

R

Just skimp through and just remind yourself of, this is what happened at the interview. Maybe when you are going through it, just skimp through it, just think about how you were thinking and feeling at that time. What went through your mind at that time?

C06

I think basically I can remember.

R

OK. My research questions I'm going to ask you are standard questions so that I am collecting the same information from everybody. So I'll ask you the questions in a very set way. So first of all, just some background information. Which is your country of birth?

C06

China, Shanghai, China.

R

Thank you. From birth to the age of about 20, in which country did you spend most time in?

C06

China.

R

Great. Do you consider yourself a Chinese?

C06

Yep, I do.

R

539

OK. What do you think is the race, ethnicity, and nationality of MF who interviewed you?

C06

Ur.

R

What do you think is his race?

C06

You mean that it's a hard thing or something like that? ((pointed to her own arm))

R

Yeah, his race, his ethnicity or, his nationality, what do you think is his background?

C06

He's quite nice, it's like …

R

I mean, you're Chinese Asian what do you think he is?

C06

He's a good guy, it's like, yeah, really is like native Aussie people.

R

Native Australian?

C06

Yeah, native Australian.

R

And the accent. What accent did you think he had?

C06

Australian accent.

R

How long have you lived in Australia?

C06

About seven years.

R

Have you lived anywhere else for any extended period of time?

C06

Except China and here, that's it.

R

China and here, OK.

C06

OK.

R

Here in Sydney, for seven years?

C06

Yep.

R

Alright, now into your experience of the job interview. When you left the interview the other day how did you feel it went?

C06

Just like normal, but it's like cannot, cannot predict the situation, nothing can be expected so, just like not really have the feeling, probably I was thinking it was tough, cause the Martin Place when I go inside, when I go inside, the environment give me the influence, it's like that.

R

What about the environment?

C06

The place is really old, the place is really old, so I was thinking probably the person they're going to hire, the staff they going to hire, is bit like, the level a bit higher, so I'm not, I cannot guarantee whether my interview is really good or not.

R

So the environment is a little bit old, so that gave you a bit of idea about the manager.

C06

Yeah, I was probably thinking it's not easy to go inside like, go inside of this

R

To get into the organization.

C06

Yep, that's more I'm thinking like that.

R

When you read the, did you see the job advertisement for this position?

C06

Actually I was applying the other branch, but they arrange me to the Martin Place.

R

How did you know about the position at the other branch?

C06

I saw on the internet, I just did the job search. And I apply the job like the position there.

R

When you first read the internet advertisement, what went through your mind? What were you thinking?

C06

I was thinking the position is like suitable for me, cause I'm doing customer service so, which is relate to each other, and probably I think I got the qualification to apply this one.

R

What was it about the advertisement that made it interesting for you?

C06

Not really, I just thinking it's like reach my, like the things I want, is reach the, yeah it's match what I was thinking so I just look at it.

R

What were the things that match?

C06

Just like match my qualification and what would I need …

R

Alright qualification.

C06

… and the experience I got. Cause I got the customer service experience, which I was thinking it's suitable for me.

R

OK., so your qualification, your experience, anything else?

C06

Not think a lot, I just apply that and try whether they going to call me or not.

R

Now what expectations or questions or any concerns that you had about the job advertisement when you had read it?

C06

I think just like the online test, the online test, probably some questions is a little harder for me to answer, cause they got the online, when you fill up all your personal information, everything's done, they gonna still ask you like the online test, so probably some questions a bit harder.

R

Can you remember any of those questions that were a bit hard?

C06

It's like, some questions, it's hard to tell, the question. Probably they give you some like, role play question, and these questions is not really hard for me probably, but it's like ask the meaning of this word, or probably this word never seen it because different background you know, probably it's like for native person they know the meaning of the word they give you, some word probably you never use it. They going

to ask you, do you know the meaning of that, sometimes it's a bit harder for us, and you got the time limitation. You can use your dictionary or whatever.

R

So there was a time limit as well and there was the vocabulary.

C06

Vocabulary questions harder, but for the mathematics questions, it's not really hard, but you need to read all the questions first. Probably the mathematics is really easy, but you need to go in through all the things, they give you time limitation, it's a bit harder.

R

So the vocabulary was a challenge, the time limit was a challenge, anything else?

C06

Other thing is fine, just like that.

R

Any other concerns about the job advertisement or questions when you read it?

C06

Not really.

R

Before you went to the interview, did you have any concerns?

C06

Of course, a bit nervous. Cause I don't know what going to happen to me. I'm going to see how's the branch manager look like. I was considering whether he was going to give me the tough questions. So fortunately I prepare some questions probably they like common it's like interview questions and I prepare the answer. If like the questions you prepare and what they ask you is different. Still the questions I prepare is a bit different because they ask me all the role play questions.

R

Were there any questions that they asked you that you were not prepared for then?

C06

I don't think all the questions I prepare, because it's all role play questions. I was like study something, it's like about the AFSO, probably they're going to ask me some information, it's like what you understand about the bank or whatever, probably they didn't ask me and probably strength, what's your strength, what's your weakness. They not really asking about this kind of questions. It's like tell me about yourself, so probably that's a common question, so you got to tell about your background. That kind of questions is fine for me.

R

So there were some, a lot of role play questions were unexpected for you.

C06

All role play questions.

R

So you were not expecting those?

C06

No.

R

Now what did you expect to happen at the interview?

C06

He asked me all the questions about the customer service. Cause I apply this kind of job, so I was expecting he's going to ask me some like your target whatever you working like target base or not, yeah this kind of question I was expecting

R

OK. anything else you expect to happen at the interview apart from him asking about your target, your job?

C06

Not really.

R

You didn't have any expectation about what will happen at the interview?

C06

No.

R

What did you expect the outcome of the interview to be?

C06

Of course, I was hoping I can pass the interview, so going to hire me, I can get the position.

R

So that's what you hope to get, but what did you think the end of the interview would be all about?

C06

I was thinking, probably there got more candidates, so I got more competitor. I was thinking, cause you know that place all the people walk in there, they're basically all Australian people. You can see less Asian people. Cause when you go to Chinatown branch, you can compare. Different. Totally different. So that's what I was thinking. Probably they need more people that can speak English other than Chinese, because Martin Place, basically all business persons. Not really personal things, personal things probably other branches is more.

R

Now what preparation did you make for the interview?   We talked a little bit about that already.

C06

Yeah, just your clothes, you need to wear the formal, formal look to other people. Prepare some questions, do some survey about the bank, so go to the website to do like the structure of the bank whatever, so it's a bit easier for you to answer all the questions. Not a lot, just prepare some common questions, probably about my background, yeah prepare for that.

R

What about your background? What did you prepare for?

C06

Yeah I just tell them my major, what I study before, and what's my working experience, so why I can contribute to the company.

R

What was your first impression of MF at the interview?

C06

Really really nice. He's a really nice guy.

R

Now what do you think was the role of MF in the interview?

C06

He's a really good, he like ask you question, is really good leader, so all the questions he ask me, he will explain to me first and after that like let me tell him the scenario or whatever. He will explain very clearly for me so, for example he quite like talking, because he's quite high level.

R

What do you think his role is as an interviewer? What was he suppose to do at the interview?

C06

Probably is like direct me to answer all the questions.

R

Get you to answer his questions. Anything else that he's suppose to do at the interview?

C06

I think he also need to check whether I am qualified for the position or not.   It's like the right person he's going to hire or not.

R

OK., so he needs to make an assessment of you.

C06

Yeah, assessment, whether I got the experience is enough, whether I can suffice, it's like contribute to the position or not.

R

So it's about assessing you as well, anything else?

C06

Nothing.

R

What did you expect him to do at the interview?

C06

Just like give me all the questions, ask me, it's normal expecting. Not really expect a lot.

R

Question and answer.

C06

Yeah, yeah.

R

What do you think he expected of you?

C06

Probably, perform is like better than what I perform that day. I think probably I can give him more, it's like more working experience, it's like what he ask me.

R

Do you think he expected more of you than what you actually did at the interview?

C06

Yep.

R

What exactly do you think he would have like to have heard from you?

C06

I don't know probably like the, he ask me can you give me examples like good customer service in any restaurant or whatever, that time I was thinking, cause basically all the customer servicing here is quite good, so all like ordinary service not really outstanding, probably I can give him more examples like my experience it will be better.

R

Now what do you think was your role at the interview?

C06

Like answer the questions. What he ask me, I need to answer them.

R

Anything else?

C06

No, not at all.

R

So, primarily it's just for you to answer his questions.

C06

Yep.

R

OK., so what do you think was the purpose of the interview?

C06

It's like, assessment for you. The purpose of the interview, they need to assess like, whether you're good or not. So whether it's match, it's like what you tell to them, the resume, yeah. They of course need to do the face to face, because before that we already done the phone interview, like human resource, so for the, that's why human resource arrange me to the branch manager, they gonna see me, what it's like. Cause before the interview they also need to do like preliminary check, for the bank, really important. Like work ethic, they gotta see whether you have like, the good work ethics, whatever.

R

So the interview is to provide some more information or confirmation of your resume and the previous interviews.

C06

Yep.

R

Did the interview achieve its purpose?

C06

I think so

R

In what way?

C06

The outcome, so they, they, I think got more candidates, so the assessment is like they choose the other one, so I think it reached their purpose.

R

It achieved their purpose?

C06

Yep.

R

Did you have a purpose from that particular interview?

C06

Yeah, that's why, after the interview, even I didn't get higher, I still contact with the human resource, that's why they arrange me the other chance, at least I know I'm not the worst.

R

So they referred you to another branch.

C06

Yeah, it's not like they refuse straight away.

R

Yeah, they haven't rejected you outright.

C06

Yeah, yeah.

R

How would you describe the way the manager communicated with you?

C06

Friendly, quite friendly, that's it, I think.

R

How do you like to communicate?

C06

Like I need to have the eye contact with him. Yeah, I need to convince him I have like, I'm not feel nervous when talking with you, so make him feel comfortable, so probably I'm prepared for the interview and I really want to get the job, yeah.

R

Any other way you would like to communicate?

C06

Just probably it's some like, I have no idea.

R

Mainly keep eye contact and show him that you are confident.

C06

Yep.

R

OK. What were the important things that you wanted to communicate in the interview?

C06

To show him that, like provide him that I can, I have the experience, in the same field area, so the job is suitable for me. Again like I can perform the role.

R

So that was the most important. Anything else you wanted to communicate to him?

C06

Not really.

R

Do you feel you were able to communicate those things?

C06

Yep.

R

How did you feel about the questions that MF asked you? And I wrote down the questions that he asked which is quite a lot. He asked you, Why did you actually apply for a job at the AFSO? What about customer service, what is probably the most exciting part for you in the role? What do you feel is probably the hardest part of the job, probably not the enjoyable part, what do you least enjoy about customer service? Can you give an example where you use your fact-finding skills to gain information from a client, how did you go about it and what was the outcome? One example of when you successfully applied cross-selling, what did you do, and what was the outcome? Is there a time when you actually asked for external referral. What approach have you taken in the past when you've been behind your targets? Can you give an example of when you displayed outstanding service to a colleague or a client to get a job done? Have you ever had a time where you've got to say to somebody, 'you know what, you're not really performing? When it's really hectic, how did you cope? Tell me how you currently demonstrate a professional approach to work. Can you remember any difficult customer you dealt with? What's the most important thing you look for in a job? How do you ensure that you get what you want out of a job? How do you make sure that you get what you want everyday? How do you make sure you have fun at work? Have you ever had to push the limit and think outside the square to get a resolution? Is there a time where you had to show a bit of initiative to get something resolved or to get the sale over the line when it normally wasn't to happen? Is there any times you had to do that? How do you approach a person whose language is not the same as yours like a Korean person, how do you get them what they need? Can you describe a situation where you had to hold your tongue, or not act in a certain way even though you thought your opinion was a correct one? What do you think the best way to manage time is? How do you feel about the questions that were asked?

C06

Really professional about the customer service. It is, because when we do our job, we need to have like some training, so basically some training is relate to the questions they asking. So I think these questions they all assess like the problem solving, you can do properly or not, it's like daily planning, the target, cause for sure doing customer service is like sales. All of you need to have the sales target, so I think the questions is quite related to the position. How you solve the problem later on when

you meet like, have this kind of customer, have this kind of problem, how you going to solve it.

R

So you feel they were professional questions, relevant to the job.

C06

Yep, it's really relevant to the job.

R

How would you rate the manager's confidence level in communicating with you during the interview? Say, zero, bad, to ten, very good. How would you rate his confidence level?

C06

I think ten. He is very confident.

R

OK., so there is nothing he has to do to improve his rating. Is there anything he could have done to make it even better?

C06

No, I think he's really good, done really good, and can have fun with you. Every question is like, even like talking about my previous job whatever, he can like, tell, get some opinion about the previous one. Really good.

R

How would you rate your confidence level in communicating with MF?

C06

Probably eight.

R

Yeah?

C06

Still because of the environment, a bit nervous, it's like my background is Chinese. Cause I was expecting probably I can go to like Chinatown branch or whatever, so it's like more suitable for my position, cause I can tell them it's my language advantage to the branch manager, but in there probably I won't show this one, cause it's like probably require Australian people, probably English speaking is more than enough.

R

So, what could have improved your rating?

C06

I think, probably my English, I think.

R

It's primarily a language thing.

C06

Yeah, language thing primarily. It is.

R

So, you are basically quite happy with the way you communicated.

C06

Yep, I really happy.

R

How would you describe the way you communicate?

C06

Quite fluent, quite friendly, not really nervous.

R

Fluent and friendly.

C06

Yep. Also confident

R

What stood out for you about the interview? What stood out for you? Anything that sort of like that was the best thing?

C06

When he tell about the real life, it's like the problem, the situation, so I can give him the better way to solve the problem so, up till now in my position, my current role, I can perform quite good so, when I explain to him, he feel happy, I think he write down lots of things, like ( ) sale, forced sale, I can perform it, I can understand the meaning of that.

R

OK., so those were good things in the interview.

C06

Yep.

R

Was there anything said or done that surprised you?

C06

Not really.

R

Nothing surprising at the interview? Was the interview easy or hard in any way?

C06

It's not easy, cause you need thinking about your position, some problem solving, it's like, he just describe the situation, you need to give him the answer straight away, so basically it's not really easy. Like this question he ask me, you must have your real life experience. Without real life experience, it's really hard for you to answer that.

R

So it wasn't easy because they was based on real experiences.

C06

Yeah, really practical.

R

So what helped or hindered the interview?

C06

Can give me more experience for the next time interview. Really prove my, like what kind of questions they're going to ask you, so I can prepare for the next time. I can like provide a better answer. Cause probably I am looking for some job like same as this one, so basically I can gain the experience a lot.

R

You learn from this interview for your next interview. Now one of the things I wanted was pictures, that may sort of illustrate your experience of that interview. I don't suppose you have any pictures with you?

C06

No, sorry.

R

That's OK. In the information and consent form that was one of the things I asked for, but it's often difficult for people to get pictures, so I 've got some here. So what I might get you to do, is just to flip through the pictures quickly, and pick maybe 3, 4, 5, 6 pictures that you feel, oh that reminded me of the interview about, or that reminded me a little bit of how I feel, or that was what I was thinking about at the interview. So anything that sort of help you reflect on your experience of the job interview. Any picture at all, just flip through it, there are about 50 of them, we'll go through it in about five, ten minutes.

C06

Probably this one

R

Why, why do you say that?

C06

Cause it's relate to my, what I am doing now.

R

OK., this Picture 6.

C06

Yep.

R

This picture?

C06

Cause probably I saw something it's like in his office.

R

This is Picture 3. It reminds you of something in his office? Anything that illustrates how you feel about the interview.

C06

Yeah, probably this one ((Picture 21)), probably I'm doing something like that.

R

It's about what you were doing?

C06

Yeah.

R

Nothing much there?

C06

Not really.

R

Nothing? Let's put it aside. How do you feel about being interviewed by someone from a different culture?

C06

The feeling, at least it's like a bit different. Cause probably if we have the same culture, we are quite closer. I feel like it's important, it's like different culture probably I feel, I don't know, it's hard to expect something happen. Cannot expect the result. If like the same background or culture whatever probably it's a bit easier when after the interview I have the feeling I can do it.

R

When you say closer what do you mean?

C06

Cause we're the same culture, so probably something in common.

R

What would you have in common if you were from the same culture, that is, that you don't have with someone from a different culture?

C06

The culture difference?

R

What are some of the things in culture that's different?

C06

I don't know, just the feeling, just the feeling it's different. Definitely the feeling is different. Just like the people they want to come to get the mobile phone, for sure if I am there and the other guy is there, it's like for example, Indian guy there, from the

Chinese customer, definitely want to come to me. Definitely, they feel closer, because talk in the same language or whatever.

R

So there is a difference in how you behave in an interview when its from a different culture?

C06

Probably, cause I've never tried that, cause basically I'm looking for a job in here. So when I have the interview in here, it's like if it's the same culture, it's a bit closer. Like this job, my current job when I did interview with my boss, cause he's from Indonesia, so all Asian people, I feel a bit closer to him.

R

So what did you do, with this Indonesian interview?

C06

Quite relaxed. Cause our interview is not in office, it was in a café as well. He came to me, and I quite relaxed talk with him. Everything he asked me, I'm not really nervous about them. Cause that one is like, the bank job, probably they require higher level.

R

So it's the different type of jobs, and it's a different culture as well.

C06

Yeah, it's right.

R

Were there any instances in the interview that you thought were cultural?

C06

Not really.

R

So culture was a challenge in the interview. One of the reasons is the language thing you were saying just now. And the second thing you mentioned is if it was from the same culture, you would feel closer. So that was another challenge. What else?

C06

Yes, culture a bit different cause different background, and the service like the criteria for them to like, range the customer service, and the way we range the customer is a little bit different as well.

R

What do you mean by the way we range the customer?

C06

I don't know, he asked me to describe outstanding whatever, like customer, like that one, that's why for me it's a bit hard, I was thinking, it was all quite good, but he was asking me to like describe one outstanding one.

R

So what he considers good you may think differently.

C06

Yeah, for me it's normal, for him it's good. For him is good, for me is normal.

R

So the way you look at customer service may be different.

C06

Yep, because of different culture.

R

Anything else that might be different?

C06

Not really, nothing.

R

Now, research tells us that cultural values such as the different ways of respecting superiors or customers, they can influence your experience in a job interview. Do you feel that this has impacted your interview experience?

C06

A bit probably, yeah I need to like improve, it's like I need to get more knowledge about the culture in here, probably it's like ( ) so next time when I go for interview, like I can offer like, how to say that, yeah, probably more confident.

R

So, basically just to acquire more knowledge, more understanding about their culture. You're going to do that by getting more experience in job interviewing.

C06

Yep, that's right.

R

Research also tells us that work values are different for people from different cultures. What are some work values that are important to you?

C06

The value important to me, I think the experience, your working experience, real life experience is more important.

R

Real life experience. Anything else?

C06

Also your knowledge, like your study, your knowledge you gain from your university is quite important.

R

Anything else?

C06

Not really.

R

Now some more about research, tells us that cultural cues such as interviewer's race, the interviewer's accent, the interviewer's name, they can influence your experience of the job interview. Do you think that this has influenced your experience?

C06

Yeah, of course. It will provide you, it will offer you more idea, next time when you do the interview. Yeah, even in your real life, probably the questions they ask you, gonna provide you more experience next time you do the real life problem solving.

R

Do you feel like his accent has influenced your experience?

C06

Accent? No, no.

R

Cultural stereotypes. This is the last thing that research is telling us. Stereotypes, they can influence the job interviews. Do you understand the word stereotypes?

C06

No, I don't know.

R

So we are think that this person is from this culture, so they must be like this. Or that person is from this culture, so they must like that. So that's stereotype. So we think about Australian interviewers, oh he must be a little bit like this. So do you think your understanding of Australian stereotypes have influenced your experience of your in the job interview?

C06

Yeah.

R

In what way?

C06

I don't know, probably you need to, yeah, it's hard to tell. Probably you can get a kind of feeling, you need to get more knowledge about the Australian, like the culture of Australia, so it will be helpful for you.

R

So the main thing is we don't know enough.

C06

Yeah, that's right, cause our background, totally different. Even you living here, probably just know some news, it's still different. Just like the Australian people live

in China, same. What we talking, what we joking, we find it funny thing, probably they find it hard for them to understand that. Yes, it's true.

R

So basically, we don't have enough knowledge and experience yet.

C06

Yes, definitely.

R

How would you describe your culture?

C06

My culture, quite traditional Chinese.

R

What is traditional Chinese?

C06

Hard to explain, I've not idea, no idea about that.

R

It's hard to explain culture.

C06

Yeah it's really hard to explain the culture.

R

One word?

C06

No idea about that.

R

OK. How would you describe the culture of MF?

C06

Just one time meet him, still Australian culture background.

R

OK., describe Australian culture.

C06

Cause for this type question, I think it's really hard, cause just one time meet each other so, it's really hard to say what's the culture he is having or whatever.

R

OK., so we agree that MF is native Australian? So Australian culture? Generally how would you describe Australian culture?

C06

Quite peaceful with each other. He's like friendly to the people. Quite fair to each other I think.

R

They are quite fair to each other.

C06

Yeah, I think so.

R

Anything else?

C06

No.

R

Here is another question that might be a bit tricky. What do you think culture is?

C06

It's like kind of traditional, it's like, thinks like, I don't know

R

Hard to explain.

C06

Really really hard to explain. So people's personality probably also represent a part of culture. The way you doing, perform the thing in different roles, is a culture as well. Probably it's like what you mention before, they were thinking probably this person from this country they probably going like that, it's kind of culture as well.

R

So there are many different types of cultures we're talking about.

C06

Yeah.

R

How do you know when something is cultural?

C06

It's quite common to the same type of people.

R

OK., something that is common to the same group of people.

C06

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So the way they eating, the way they talking. Just like Indian people, they always talking with the head like that, that's culture as well. Yeah, Chinese people you can see as well.

R

What else? So the way they behave, the way they talk, what else makes their cultures different?

C06

And the way they thinking about the problem, like different scenario, different situation, the way they thinking is different. Probably for Australian people they want

to do the formal way, to process, probably for other, like Chinese people, probably want to do faster, probably they a bit tricky.

R

So the way they think, and the way they problem solve might be different.

C06

I think different, for me if I want to do the thing, I want to do as soon as possible, do it faster, but probably for them, they want to do this, do that, to perform it's like, for them it's like thinking o this one useless, wasting time, but I want to do fast, do good, they were thinking probably this way they doing is good, but I was thinking this that is wasting the time.

R

Anything else apart from the way they problem solve, that might be different in how they think?

C06

No.

R

Very interesting.

C06

I think that's the culture as well.

R

Very interesting. What do you think are some ways people in an interview are different when their cultures are different?

C06

Yeah, probably some people want to be quite like good listener, they just like follow the questions they want to ask you, they won't like direct to go for further thinking, some people is like quite prominent, they probably just like, want to talk more about the questions, They will make you to answer that, and probably you get one opinion, and they can go for another, they can talk to you about more about the situation.

R

Anything else, about interviews, about cultures?

C06

Not really got lots of experience about interview, so that's why it's a bit harder.

R

It's a bit hard. So think about the interview you had with MF, and the interview you had with this Indonesian person, how are they different, you mentioned one, you're closer to the Indonesian person?

C06

It's like, with him, it's like chit-chat, so basically he asked me about yourself, some formal questions, not really lots of like role-play questions, probably enquiry about some my work ethic, like cause we deal with the cash transactions, something like that, yeah, not a lot, we're talking about my family, yeah, we going through like this kind of thing, because my husband also from Indo, so that's why we talking about that, it's like we were friends.

R

So what else did you talk about that you didn't talk at the interview with MF?

C06

With MF, for sure, just like the formal questions, he follow all the paper work, asking me all the situations, that it.

R

OK., and with the Indonesian one, what did he talk about?

C06

He not really follow, cause different company, this one like personal one, the other one is like government job right, government owned, so that's why for sure it's different. The other interview is quite formal, this interview, and a different job scenario, so a bit different as well, the way they want to see whether you like to talk to customers, the salesperson, whether you like to talk to people, and they chit-chat with you, for MF, its like whether you reach the qualifications or not.

R

One more formal, the other more informal.

C06

Yep.

R

So they talked about family things.

C06

Yep.

R

Did the interview meet your expectation?

C06

Yeah.

R

In what way?

C06

Yeah, they asked me the questions quite relevant, relate to my current job, so not really asking me what you going to do in the banking area, cause they know I don't

have banking experience, and they tell me they going to provide the training for the things, whatever.

R

What could have been different about the interview, to make it better for you?

C06

Make it better for me?

R

Or easier?

C06

Probably it's still depend on the experience, the language you talking, probably get more working real life experience, will provide me more, like if you can handle all different situations, that's only thing I have lack of, my experience about the interview, if I can get more working experience, probably I get provide more opinion to the interviewer.

R

OK. Now what do you think a good cross-cultural job interview would look like? If you imagine a good cross-cultural job interview, how ill that look like?

C06

Nothing relate to the culture, all relate to the job, so depends on how you want to manage the situation, not really racist, I don't know, yeah, it's like all focused on the position they want to perform, what kind of things its related.

R

So a good cross-cultural job interview is whether culture is not important?

C06

Yep.

R

OK. What did the outcome of the interview mean to you?

C06

I can know which level I am, yeah, so whether it's like, I can get the experience from the interview, so provide me some idea about the interview thing, so it provide me some idea about the position going to perform, if I successfully get hired, so I need to do it this way,   yeah.

R

So you had some knowledge?

C06

Yeah.

R

And also you learn something about the interview process?

C06

Yep.

R

Anything else?

C06

No.

R

We are nearly finished. How did you feel about the environment in which the interview took place? You said that it's old, how do you feel about that?

C06

Yeah, feel it's like, this place, quite formal, it's really really formal, the bank probably the first AFSO bank in Australia, I was thinking, I don't know, look like really old, quite it's, because, I never been there.

R

OK., the fact that it's old, how did that make you feel?

C06

Feel it's a bit serious, for sure, the branch manager is like quite, just feel a bit formal.

R

Formal and serious?

C06

Yep.

R

One last question, is there any question that I have not asked, that you think I should ask?

C06

Not really, that place, probably I was thinking, if I got a job in there, it's pressure.

R

Pressure? In what way?

C06

Looks, looks like too serious this place, it's really big, I feel this environment, honestly, I'm not really ideal this kind of environment, I don't know why.

R

You don't?

C06

Yes, too old, I like the normal, it's like the AFSO branch in ( ) that kind of environment, feel it's like quite relate to current society, cause that one is really old, you can see it, when you walking there, you feel pressure, I don't know, even when I inside I feel, not really comfortable.

R

Not for you, doesn't feel comfortable for you?

C06

No, when I go inside, I feel Oh not comfortable.

R

Too formal for you.

C06

Too formal.

R

You prefer it to be more contemporary?

C06

Yep, it's like, can have fun, in there you can see, even all the persons working there, the customer service persons, they look serious, looks like quite big, you can actually see, they got high pressure as well, I can feel that, but not like when I went to the other branches, they all looks like relaxed, not really nervous, yeah, yeah, probably in there, they all pretending to smile, even though they not feel happy, they need to smile too. But in the other branches I can't feel it, much better

R

So in a way it's not as relaxed as the other branch.

C06

Yep.

R

Any other comments you can make apart from that?

C06

No, but still really nice talking to MF.

R

Yeah, it was good talking to him

C06

Yeah.

End of tape (49 minutes 23 seconds)