Original Article:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF JOB INTERVIEWERS' IMPLICIT PERSON THEORIES

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Abstract

Job interviewers' implicit person theories (i.e., beliefs that personalities are adaptable or fixed) were examined through a qualitative analysis of interviews with job interviewers. The study demonstrates that job interviewers tend to use generalized trait descriptions of applicants when determining their selection. This is problematic because it neglects the context's interference with the applicant—for example, the effect of a new manager, colleagues, or company culture. The study demonstrates that job interviewers implicitly assume that the impressions they form of an applicant during the job interview are easily transferrable to the job they are seeking to fill. Thus, job interviewers appear to view applicants as persons with fixed personality traits, despite human adaptability. This is not necessarily because the job interviewer has a *stable* implicit entity theory of persons; instead, it is argued that the job interview setting creates such assumptions. Implications for job interview research and suggested modifications of job interviews are discussed, and perspectives relating to other societal issues are raised.

Keywords: Person theory, selection, job interview, personality judgment, context

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INTRODUCTION

"The nature of free will is a philosophical issue; whether people believe they have it is a psychological one; and whether people actually have it is in the terrain in between."
(Dweck & Molden, 2008, p. 44)

In 1968, Walter Mischel started the person–situation debate concerning whether personality is a stable phenomenon or whether it changes depending on the situations in which people engage. Some researchers claim to have resolved the debate with a compromise, stating that personality consists of a stable core and is, at the same time, affected by situational influences (e.g., Fleeson, 2004).

When it comes to laymen, Dweck and Molden (2008) suggest that around half of the population hold an *implicit theory of persons* as stable entities who are incapable of significant change, while the other half believe that people are malleable. The extent to which people believe in the importance of context for personality has a huge impact on both research and real-life behavior. For instance, prediction of a person's behavior requires belief in the stability of that person across time and contexts.

In a job interview (hereafter: JI) setting, job interviewers (hereafter: interviewers) may believe that an applicant's behavior during the JI can be transferred to the entirely new situation of the job they are seeking to fill. Though interviewers may ask contextualized questions, it remains to be answered whether interviewers actually emphasize this information when judging and deciding on an applicant. Today, most studies on JIs are concerned with what goes on *during* the JI, and less with decision making processes *after* the JI. The importance of such judgment processes cannot be underestimated: most peoples' lives are highly influenced by their professional careers, and the path that any employee follows begins with being judged and (de)selected by interviewers.

The present study addresses whether interviewers emphasize stability and/or make contextual reservations in their decision making *after* a JI. If an interviewer were to believe that persons change, then their prediction of an applicant's performance—which is the aim of the JI—would not be logical, because the interviewer would recognize that the applicant might behave very differently in the new job setting.

In their decision making, interviewers must assume that their judgment of an applicant is fairly accurate; otherwise, it would not make sense for them to draw serious conclusions from the JI. However, accurate judgments build on certain assumptions of persons' stability. In this article, besides investigating interviewers' implicit person theories, I discuss whether these theories can be seen as reasonable.

To my knowledge, no research on interviewers' implicit person theories has yet been conducted. Furthermore, studies investigating interviewers' judgments often seem to be conducted with either undergraduate students (playing the role of interviewers; see also Arnett, 2008) or incumbents, and/or in *experimental* field settings. This study is instead

based on impressions gained by interviewers in real JIs in natural settings. Despite the fact that JIs are qualitative, qualitative interviewing of interviewers about their judgments has only scarcely been employed as a research tool. Thus, this qualitative research advances and nuances our perspective on interviewers' judgment processes, as it focuses on single, specific interviewers instead of quantitative aggregations of interviewers.

To summarize, the present study investigates what interviewers in a JI setting emphasize in their judgment of applicants, and whether they make contextual reservations of their judgments. Through this analysis, I discuss whether interviewers seem to believe in the stability or malleability of persons, and discuss how the JI setting may lead to certain beliefs among interviewers.

Is it Possible to Make a Correct Judgment?

The JI is often based on self-report measures (i.e., it is the applicant who writes the application and resume, and answers the interviewer's questions). However, one may query whether others actually know more about the applicant than the applicant, him/herself (Hofstee, 1994). People tend to see themselves differently than the way in which others see them (Kwan, John, Kenny, Bond, & Robins, 2004; Kwan, John, Robins, & Kuang, 2008; Pronin, 2008). Where a job is concerned, it makes sense to examine how an applicant is perceived by colleagues, leaders, customers, and other stakeholders in a work-related context, since these impressions have an impact on the applicant's performance and evaluation thereof. Nevertheless, in a JI it is primarily the applicant's own impression of him/herself that is investigated.

Vazire and Carlsons' (2010) review found that the correlation between self-perception and objective measures is between $r=.14$ and $r=.34$ (depending on the specific study and measures), while the correlation between how people view themselves and how others close to them (i.e., not random interviewers) perceive them is between $r=.23$ and $r=.57$. Vazire and Carlsons' (2010) research was taken from situations in which subjects had no apparent incentive to consciously distort their judgments. Moreover, compared to how others see them, people tend to see themselves in a more favorable light and do not seem to be aware that this is the case (Pronin, 2007).

Despite this self–other bias, the picture that an applicant paints of him/herself during a JI may be even more inflated by the JI setting and its restrictions. For instance, the JI structure influences persons' behavior and self-descriptions (Blackman, 2002), as well as the kind of questions the applicant is asked. In addition to this, impression management tactics (tactics used by applicants to create a good image in the eye of the interviewer) may distort the picture interviewers get of the applicant, and such tactics are indeed to be expected (Kristof-Brown, Barrick, & Franke, 2002; Levashina & Campion, 2007; McFarland, Ryan, & Kriska, 2003; Swider, Barrick, Harris, & Stoverink, 2011). Even faking is quite common and is reported to occur in most JIs (Levashina & Campion, 2007; Weiss & Feldman, 2006). Applicants' impression management strategies affect

interviewers' hiring recommendations, even though they only tell interviewers about how good an applicant is at performing in a JI setting (Fletcher, 1990). Finally, applicants' chances of JI success can be increased by pre-interview coaching (Maurer, Solamon, & Lippstreu, 2008).

Altogether, the aspects mentioned above paint the JI as a very difficult setting in which to obtain an accurate picture of an applicant. When researchers investigate what to do about this, they usually recommend methods of reducing bias when judging people (Lundmann, 2016). However, searching for an accurate picture implicitly assumes that an accurate picture exists, and this very idea is problematic for various reasons, as explained below.

Interviewers' Predictions Require the Stability of Applicants' Personalities

Applicants' personalities are indeed important for their job performance, and personality can be seen as a wide phenomenon that is not simply reducible to the Big Five personality traits that are often studied by psychological researchers (for more on the Big Five personality traits, see, e.g., McCrae & Costa, 2008). If we view personality as a way of being, then substantial aspects would include social skills, interests, attitudes, and values (John, Robins, & Pervin, 2008).

However, as already stated, the judgment of applicants occurs in a special context. The typical JI is often a very artificial situation—two persons face each other, with one or both of them having considerable incentive to impress the other. When predicting something about the applicant, the interviewer must rely on the impressions that he or she gets and the belief that these impressions tell him/her something about how the applicant would perform in the job being recruited for. The applicant's way of being must therefore be assumed to be somewhat stable and context-independent; otherwise, the interviewer could not with any accuracy predict how the applicant would perform in the job. Although past job experience is sometimes seen as the best predictor of future job performance, research on this is somewhat limited, and not optimistic (Breaugh, 2009). According to Lewis (1997), research generally neglects to take important incidents into account when correlating past experience with future behavior. In addition, many theorists suggest that personality changes, to varying degrees, in different social situations and relations (Bargh & Williams, 2006; Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001; Gergen, 1999, 2009; Komatsu, 2012); in different cultural settings (Bruner, 1990; Valsiner, 1998); in accordance with different practices (Dreier, 1999; Holland & Lave, 2009); and across adult life (Roberts, Walton, & Viechtbauer, 2006; Roberts, Wood, & Caspi, 2008; Specht, Egloff, & Schmukle, 2011). In addition, we know from classical social psychology that people vary depending on the kinds of roles they are ascribed (cf. Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973; Milgram, 1963), and that others' expectations of them do, to a certain degree, predict their performance (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1966). Finally, personality tends to develop through the social (working) roles people have or acquire (DeRue & Morgeson, 2007; Helson & Soto, 2005;

Helson, Mitchell, & Moane, 1984), which underscores that jobs also *create* personality. In addition, not only are subjects ever changing, but companies are also changing ever more rapidly (Burke, Pierce, & Salas, 2006).

Hence, taking the literature into account, it could be more appropriate to see personality as a mere performance (see, e.g., Gergen, 1997; LaPointe, 2010; Robinson, 2004) that is not necessarily connected to past or future performance. Furthermore, when referring to personality, one is referring to someone's *judgment* of personality, and this judgment is primarily based on *specific* performances (e.g., an applicant's performance during a JI or an applicant's score on a personality test). Thus, from my point of view, personality is better conceived as a relational construction (Gergen, 1999) between an interviewer and applicant in the JI setting, rather than a fixed entity inside an individual's head.

In summary, the idea that one is able to make meaningful and accurate judgments of a person assumes that persons are comparatively stable and context-independent. However, this idea seems rather problematic, particularly in the JI setting, where an applicant presumably has incentives to shape his/her description. Furthermore, because the JI setting lacks the context of the job in which the applicant would perform, it is presumably difficult for interviewers to make an accurate judgment of the applicant's job performance in the new position.

Interviewers' Theories About Persons as Determinants for Their Judgment

According to Dweck, Chiu, and Hong (1995), a person theory can be categorized as an entity theory or an incremental, malleable theory. Those who subscribe to an entity theory view people as stable and unchangeable, "fixed" persons; therefore, they believe that context plays only a minor role in people's way of being, and that a person's behavior is thus predictable (Chiu, Hong, & Dweck, 1997). Incremental theorists, on the other hand, argue that persons are malleable and able to change themselves. Everybody can be categorized as a supporter of one or the other theory, although their support is a matter of degree. Dweck and Molden (2008) suggest that an equal number subscribe to each of the two theories. However, one possible limitation of the incremental theory, which focuses on people's ability to change, is the contextual influence on people's behavior (cf. above). Hence, both the implicit incremental and entity person theories hold that behavior is determined from within the person—either by fixed traits or by agency. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to add that situations and contexts also (co-)determine our behavior, and that these contexts are changeable and thus lead to an *adaptable* personality. According to this belief system, prediction is more difficult due to the complex and ever changeable nature of contexts. In the Discussion section, I return to the question of whether implicit person theories, themselves, can change.

In summary, in the Introduction section I have distinguished between two general implicit person theories: (a) an entity theory (an implicit person theory stating that a person

is relatively fixed and cannot significantly change), and (b) an adaptability theory (an implicit person theory that emphasizes a person's ability to change, irrespective of whether this change is generated by the individual or the context).

The present study investigated which implicit person theories, interviewers revealed and acted upon when judging applicants. Investigation of interviewers' person theories is important because of the impact these theories have on interviewers' selection decisions. In contrast to most other JI studies, the present study was qualitative. Below, I describe my method of conducting the study.

METHOD

Background Information

The present study was part of a larger investigation of the way in which interviewers judge applicants. The investigation consisted of two studies—the study discussed here and one other study (Lundmann, 2016). The other study investigated interviewers' judgment biases, while the present study focused on interviewers' implicit person theories, qualitatively. I attended 49 JIs as a non-participating observing member, and interviewed the interviewers immediately thereafter. The data used in the present study was collected from my interviews with the interviewers. Below, I provide some background information on the JIs that preceded my interviews with the interviewers.

The 49 JIs were selected in order to represent the variety in company size (from 10 employees to more than 15,000), company type (13 production facilities, 6 consulting companies, 2 non-governmental organizations, 11 public organizations, and 17 recruitment agencies), and positions within companies (e.g., engineer, manager, consultant, supporter, accountant, web, and salesman positions). In total, 13 companies were observed. The total number of interviewers in each JI varied between one and six. In qualitative research, variety between cases is often an advantage, and special concerns about generalizability will be taken up in the Discussion section.

Interviewers were recruited through emails, job advertisements, and personal networks. I did not have any personal interests in or associations with any of the companies, managers, or interviewers. All of the data were anonymized so the interviewees, interviewers, and companies could not be identified. I did not interact during the JI; rather, I sat on the periphery taking notes on my laptop. These notes summarized what the interviewer said during the JI and formed the basis of my interview with the interviewer following the JI about his/her judgment of the applicant (cf. below).

My Interviews with the Interviewers and Transcription

Immediately after each of the JIs I conducted an interview with the interviewer(s) about their judgment and impression of the applicant. My interview took the form of a

dialogue rather than an interrogation, and its purpose was to make the interviewer reflect upon his/her judgment of the applicant. In the study, I was interested in how the interviewers judged the applicants and if they modified their judgments with contextual information. My interview questions circled these themes, though specific questions varied between interviews. My notes from each JI also differed. Their purpose was to provide a reference for some of the questions I would ask the interviewer (e.g., if the interviewer asked a seemingly odd question, I would note this, as well as noting the applicant's answer, in order to ask about specific judgments regarding this question).

All of my interviews were audio recorded. After the data collection process, these interviews were transcribed by the author and a team of 11 research assistants. To support my focus on content meaning, the interviews were transformed into informal written language (i.e., without linguistic fillers such as "er" and "hem" and without stammering and stuttering utterances). However, all idiosyncratic phrases were maintained. The purpose of the transcription was to enable categorization of the interviews (cf. below) and to allow examples to be extracted.

Coding and Interpretation of the Interviews with the Interviewers

My interviews with the interviewers were categorized into codes by the 11 research assistants who contributed to the transcription. Five codes were developed *before* the analysis. Each of the codes indicated interviewers' entity theory perspective. Interviews that were not coded therefore indicated interviewers' adaptability theory of persons. To my knowledge, the five codes have not been used in previous studies. Actually, to my knowledge, this was the first qualitative study to investigate interviewers' implicit person theories through their performance. However, the code development was inspired by the literature on entity theory and the many discussions in personality psychology concerning stability and changes in personality and behavior (cf. above).

The purpose of the codes was to gain an overview of the data, and they were developed in order to summarize the relevancy of the interviewers' implicit person theories for the present study. The codes are defined and described in Table 1, and below I outline why these five codes were developed.

The idea of personality traits is roughly equivalent to the entity theory of persons, and therefore "trait-like descriptions" was established as a code. The purpose of a JI is to evaluate whether a person will fit into a future job setting, and when interviewers emphasized past or present performance they indicated an implicit assumption that this performance was relevant to the future. Therefore, emphasis on an applicant's performance in previous jobs (the past) and during the JI (the present) was developed into a code. Transfer of what one had experienced directly and explicitly during the JI to the future job could also indicate a strong—though implicit—belief that "what happens now will happen again," and therefore concerned the idea that an applicant's way of being was relatively stable.

However, before assuming and believing anything about an applicant, the interviewers had to believe in the value of self-report, because self-report is at the very foundation of applications, resumes, and JIs. Therefore, "belief in self-report" was also formed as a code.

There may, of course, be many more codes that are relevant for an analysis of interviewers' person theories. Nevertheless, I chose the five codes in Table 1 because they could be operationalized and because I believed they were sufficiently broad to cover variations in formulations and statements.

Table 1. **Description of the Codes**

Code	Description
Trait-like descriptions	This code was used when a job interviewer used generalized, trait-like descriptions of an applicant *without* emphasizing any strong contextual reservations. Statements such as "This applicant is definitely a very engaged person, and he is very reliable" and "She is a person who wouldn't mind working on weekends" were considered trait-like descriptions. This code did not necessarily indicate that the job interviewer only used trait-like descriptions of the applicant. However, in combination with the other codes, this code informed us of the degree to which an interviewer held an implicit person theory.
Emphasis on job interview performance	This code indicated that an applicant's performance during the job interview played a major role in the (de)selection. It was used when a job interviewer referred to impressions he/she had gained from the applicant's interview behavior, and when the applicant was primarily evaluated on the basis of these impressions. A statement such as "I really liked his professional attitude" was deemed to emphasize the JI performance.
Emphasis on resume	This code indicated that an applicant's resume played a major role in the (de)selection. It was used when the job interviewer primarily referred to the applicant's past experiences and mainly evaluated him/her on the basis of these experiences. The "emphasis on job interview performance" code and the "emphasis on resume" code could not be given simultaneously. A statement such as "She has been working with similar processes before, and this is relevant for us" was considered to emphasize the resume.
Transference of job interview behavior to future job	This code indicated that the job interviewer believed that what he/she had experienced during the job interview would also take place in the job being recruited for. It was used when the job interviewer focused on the interview behavior—and, for instance, claimed that this behavior was what the company needed—and made a positive evaluation on the basis of this. For example, a statement such as "A person with her attitude is exactly what the department needs" was deemed indicative of this attitude.
Belief in self-report	This code indicated that the job interviewer believed what the job applicant said, without any strong reservations. The code was used when the job interviewer did not question the applicant's remarks, and/or when the job interviewer's conclusion about the applicant did not conflict with what the applicant actually said during the job interview.

The research assistants reported their codings in individual qualitative reports, which were prepared for each interview. Each report was then discussed in a team consisting of the research assistant who made the report, an independent research assistant, and the author. Besides reading the report and the transcript of my interview with the respective interviewer, everybody on the team also read the transcript of the given JI that preceded my interview with the interviewer. If the team disagreed about any of the codings, the different evaluations were discussed until agreement was obtained. The distribution of codes from the evaluation reports is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. **Percentage of Cases with Respective Codings**

N=49	Trait-like descriptions	Emphasis on job interview performance	Emphasis on resume	Transference of job interview behavior to future job	Belief in self-report
Percentage of cases	100%	73%	27%	88%	76%

The Interpretations Matter, not the Results!

Obviously, coding the interviews required interpreting the interviewers' responses, because the interviewers did not explicitly articulate any person theory (rather, their *implicit* person theories were of interest). As mentioned in the Introduction, personality—or a person theory—can be understood as a mere performance. Thus, interpretations of the interviewers' person theories did not necessarily correspond to how the interviewers may have acted in other settings or contexts.

The type of research conducted in the present study comes very close to what Gephart (2004) calls "interpretive research," wherein the goal is to understand the meaning of informants' utterances. This qualitative, interpretive approach was used in the present study because: (a) the theoretical point about implicit person theories is that these could be inferred from the interviewers' performances (i.e., verbal qualitative statements) in my interviews with them; and (b) the interviewers were not explicit about their person theories, and this called for interpretation.

I use numerous examples in the Results section to illustrate how meaning was created from the interviewers' utterances, and how these utterances informed us of their person theories. The examples were selected from the raw data, and thereby serve as documentation for my interpretations and hopefully make my deductions transparent. Hence, it is not in the Results section that the contribution of this study is made, but rather in the Discussion section, where the meaning and implications are processed.

The study was conducted in Denmark, and the analyses were conducted using the original Danish data. The examples used in the Results section were translated by an expert bilingual *after* the analyses were conducted. Some may claim that a Danish sample cannot

allow for generalization. However, this builds on a certain idea of generalization, and I will return to the generalizability issue in the Discussion section. As mentioned, I see the Discussion section—rather than the Results section—as the interesting part. The discussion is of course inspired by the results, but it transcends the results, giving them perspective and meaning. Hence, from my point of view, it should not matter that the sample was Danish.

In the Results section, every quote is followed by a parenthesis stating the following: (Name of interviewer [pseudonym]/type of company conducting the JI/position being applied for/JI no. 1 to 49 [referring to the JI my interview followed, each given a separate number]).

RESULTS

What Matters Most?

The resume seems a very important factor in the decision of whom to invite to a JI (Cole, Rubin, Feild, & Giles, 2007; Thoms, McMasters, Roberts, & Dombkowski, 1999). Nevertheless, according to Breaugh (2009), data about past experiences is a questionable predictor of job performance. From a professional perspective, this is exactly what is of interest to interviewers—namely, the applicant's ability to perform optimally in the new job. Interviewers typically gain information about a given applicant from two main sources: (a) his/her resume; and (b) his/her behavior (including verbal accounts) during the JI. In this study, 73 percent of the interviewers stated that the reason for their judgment was the impression they had obtained during the JI, rather than the applicant's resume. Most interviewers did not explicitly state their emphasis on what had occurred during the JI, though this could be deduced from their statements. For example:

> I'm rather enthusiastic relatively quickly, I think… Firstly,
> he matches me, I can see. I mean, he has the sales behavior.
> He moves a little bit in the same way I do and I don't know…
> but he does it and I think he should be able to, as a salesman.
> He also listens. I mean, he also uses what I say, he uses that
> back again so we actually communicate pretty well.
> (Charles/recruitment agency/business developer/JI no. 33)

This quote underscores how non-verbal behavior during the JI was an important aspect of the interviewer's impression and judgment of the applicant as a good match. Nevertheless, interviewers also emphasized applicants' actual statements during the JI and thereby—albeit implicitly—relied on self-reports. For instance:

> Well, I liked her because she had some professionalism, such
> as project manager skills. I mean, as a person she is also
> pleasant and likable. But what I liked best in my first
> impression was her knowledge, her professionalism. She can
> easily handle some heavier tasks for us. (Brian/public
> organization/consultant/JI no. 27)

In this JI, the applicant had talked a lot about her former job. From this narrative, Brian probably derived his assumptions of her "knowledge," "professionalism," and ability to serve as a "project manager." Thus, Brian concluded that the applicant had "project manager skills" on the basis of her own verbal account, which he interpreted in a certain way, despite not seeing any of her project manager skills in practice.

It is perhaps not surprising that what happened during the JI was of utmost importance in most of the interviewers' judgments. However, this impact only existed because of a belief that it was possible to extrapolate a certain performance (e.g., of proactivity) in a specific situation (the JI) into another situation concerning different things (the new job). For instance, one of the interviewers expressed the belief that being able to dress well at a JI signaled a *generalized* tact or sense of occasion that the applicant would be able to use in different situations concerning different things.

> She wasn't a small girl, you know, or yes, maybe she was
> short but she took up a little room. And that's just fine as
> long as you understand and are able to dress in such a way
> so that it makes sense and she did. Dresses well, shows up
> looking presentable—that means quite a lot. That means she
> kind of understands the game. (Jordan/recruitment
> agency/head of finance/JI no. 47)

Here, there was an assumption that being able to dress well in the JI setting was about knowing "the game," and that this was of general importance to the new job. In addition to applying the halo effect—assuming that because she dressed well she also understood "the game"—the interviewer also extrapolated this "skill" from the JI to the specific job being recruited for.

In some of the cases where the resume was emphasized and judged as the most important issue, the applicant's behavior during the JI was, however, not neglected. For instance:

> I was about to say "Oh my, he was so pleasant"… He
> answered nicely for himself, calm and quiet. Very pleasant.
> I think he was good at explaining what he did, he was good

> at explaining who he was […] He definitely has qualifications, first and foremost because he has some of the technical skills. Unfortunately, he's probably not what we need right now. Unfortunately, we need someone with more updates now. But he's a good person and you almost feel like promising him he can start August 1st [from this date they assumed that they would have another position that matched the applicant's competencies] or something like that. (Ethan/production facility/supporter/JI no. 15)

Even though the interviewer seemed to like this applicant, the applicant's lack of professional experience was emphasized above everything else (later, the interviewers argued that he did not get the job for this reason). However, Ethan built his impression of the applicant solely on what the applicant had said (or had not said) during the JI; that is, he inferred the applicant's actual competencies from the JI without reflecting on whether his judgment might have been due to the applicant having a different idea of what was important to mention in a JI (if this were true for the applicant, he might have been able to give better answers if the interviewers had explicitly told him what kind of answers they were interested in). Nor did Ethan reflect on whether the applicant's behavior during the JI had been caused by his nervousness, which Ethan actually detected in him. Thus, even though the interviewer emphasized the applicant's professional competencies, his impressions of these still rested on the applicant's performance *during the JI*.

At other times, the resume was thought to be related to the applicant's upbringing, and this upbringing was thought to determine (parts of) the applicant's career.

> I also think there's something about him that's different from where you would normally say that it's negative that he goes around like that [the applicant's job record demonstrated many different positions in many different companies]. That is that his parents have had many jobs in different countries and that he's been culturally affected by it. And then that's just him and then you can take it or not take it. It's not necessarily because he gets tired [of the jobs]. (Robert/recruitment agency/manager for a large department/JI no. 36)

In this case, an assumption of consistency in the applicant's behavior (i.e., that what the applicant had experienced during childhood was reproduced in his professional life) determined the judgment.

Judging what the Applicant is Really Like

All of the interviewers used generalized trait-like descriptions of the applicants; that is, they stated how the applicants were in general, and had no strong reservations for these judgments. In many cases, the perceived personality traits of the applicants highly influenced the interviewers' conclusions about them. One may argue that the interviewers tended to draw from a personality trait theory such as the Big Five, as presented by McCrae and Costa (2008), in which traits are essential, relatively consistent, and stable units that can be measured and used to predict behavior. This is perhaps not surprising, since the very purpose of the judgment process is to find the best applicant and to make a conclusion about why he/she should be selected. Thus, the strong tendency to conclude what the applicant is 'really like' may be caused by the very purpose of the JI. The problems and alternatives to this will be taken up in the Discussion section.

In 76 percent of my interviews, the interviewers did not make reservations about what the applicants said about themselves, and instances in which they did express reservations were, in most cases, provoked by my questioning how sure they were in their judgment. Furthermore, despite any reservations, the interviewers often retained their overall evaluations of the applicants. Their assumptions about the applicants' personalities came primarily from what they had experienced during the JIs. However, some of the interviewers did use personality testing, and the results in most cases formed an integrated part of the JI, through reflections and questions on the results. When asking Eli what mattered the most—the applicant's behavior during the JI or the results from the personality test—he stated:

> It's the behavior during this job interview. I just use the test
> for confirmation of the impression that I've already got
> myself. It's not an answer book at all, but very rarely do I
> have people up here where it doesn't support the impression.
> (Eli/recruitment agency/engineer/JI no. 44)

This quote seems to be in line with most of the other interviewers' understandings of tests—that they were inferior to the JI. Furthermore, it reveals that Eli was more confident in his own impressions than the test, and that the test was used as a confirmatory practice (for confirmation biases, see Judge & Ferris, 1993; Nickerson, 1998) rather than a means to falsify his first impressions.

Judgments based on an applicant's perceived way of being during the JI were very influential in the interviewers' decisions. Examples of such judgments are given below:

- "He's not very thorough with things." (Dylan/recruitment agency/senior manager/JI no. 43)

- "He's not reflective at all about himself. Not at all. […] I'm thinking of whether he has ADHD." (Olivia/production facility/engineer/JI no. 18)
- "He's very carefree. […] He's a reliable guy." (Emily/production facility/salesman/JI no. 19)
- "He's very hardy." (George/consulting company/accountant/JI no. 2)
- "He's a good hard worker who gets things done." (Henry/recruitment agency/senior manager/JI no. 49)
- "In reality, I would have liked someone who's a bit more dominant." (Eli/recruitment agency/engineer/JI no. 44)
- "He's persistent." (Kevin/recruitment agency/manager of a large department/JI no. 38)
- "Yes, he's very social. That's also why he hasn't gotten further. He likes the people he's with. He's a really cozy guy." (Justin/recruitment agency/chief of outsourcing/JI no. 42)

These trait-like judgments were important for the interviewers' decisions of whom to select for the position, and concerned both the applicant's professional and his/her personal abilities. In 88 percent of the cases there was an implicit assumption that what was experienced during the JI would also occur when the applicant was in the job being recruited for (see Table 2). For instance, Eli seemed to believe that persons could be more or less context-independent (cf. his statement that he would have liked a more dominant person). Thus, he assumed that a person showing dominance during the JI would also do so in the job. None of the interviewers reflected upon whether and how they were co-creators of this impression (e.g., by asking certain questions, by giving information about their idea of a good JI performance, or by having certain pre-understandings, etc.).

Hence, the interviewers seemed to believe that the impression of the applicant that they obtained during the JI was relatively objective and accurate. The trait-like judgments were made because they were regarded as important for the applicant's performance in the job. However, none of the interviewers explicitly considered how this transfer occurred, neither during the JI nor in their arguments about preferences for applicants after the JI (i.e., in my interviews with the interviewers).

In many of the cases, the interviewers considered their own experiences and descriptions of the applicants as "the way things really are." For example:

> I had another applicant yesterday who by the way had a
> military background. He had been here for two minutes, and
> then I felt like "I don't need to talk to you anymore." He's
> going to meet Jasper [the leader of the company for which
> he was recruiting]! And it was his personal abilities, he
> needed to say three words, then he had answered complex

> questions. And his calmness, he didn't need to sit out there
> and catch some long answers out there to give the right
> words back. He was well-balanced… (Dylan [talking about
> another applicant for the same position]/recruitment
> agency/senior manager/JI no. 43)

However, it was difficult to find support for many of the statements about the applicant's way of being in the actual JI. For instance:

> He's pleasant to work with. (Employee in the hiring
> committee/public organization/consultant/JI no. 29)

It is somewhat absurd that the interviewer claimed to know whether the applicant was "pleasant to work with," because she had yet to work with him.

Returning to the reservations about some of their judgments (held by 24 percent of the interviewers), such reservations may have been more noticeable when the interviewers could compare different situations that the applicant had been in. For instance, one interviewer explained some of the applicant's performance during the JI as a result of nervousness:

> The first job interview we had with him was really good [this
> was the second job interview with the same applicant] but
> today it wasn't as good. I think it's because he was nervous
> today. (Employee in the hiring committee/production
> facility/supporter/JI no. 13)

Here, the interviewer seemed to subscribe to a theory of adaptable personality, indicating that the situation—the second JI—had influenced the applicant's behavior, and thereby expressed a potential reservation. However, it can be argued that this conclusion was drawn because the interviewer implicitly considered her impressions from the first JI to describe the applicant as he really was. Nevertheless, despite the potential reservation in the judgment, the same interviewer still made some general conclusions about the applicant's characteristics, while some of the other interviewers dismissed the applicant because their impression was that he was arrogant. In other words: even though the interviewers may have attributed an applicant's behavior to special circumstances in the JI setting, they still seemed to use their judgments as valid reasons for deselecting the applicant.

The applicants' way of being during the JI was what mattered most for the interviewers' judgments. One reason for this may have been their belief that personality is

fixed. Some interviewers said explicitly that it is almost impossible to change applicants' personalities:

> [Personality] concerns something about some very fundamental abilities. And you either have them or you don't. It's not the kind that you can say "I'll just work on it quickly" and then you have them. (Employee in the hiring committee/public organization/manager for a large department/JI no. 22)

> Chemistry is very hard to change. Work conditions can be changed and you can prepare people better for the task but our way of behaving is hard to change. (Eli/recruitment agency/engineer/JI no. 44)

Irrespective of the reasons for their judgments, interviewers seemed to implicitly operate on the assumption that the JI was able to give them answers about who the applicant *really* was, implying that there was indeed some inner non-contextual entity. According to Eli, this seemed to be the very purpose of the JI, since the applicant's resume was changeable.

DISCUSSION

In summary, the results showed that interviewers generally seemed to believe that it was possible to generalize from their impressions of the applicants, obtained before or during the JI, to the situation in the job being recruited for. This can be inferred from the interviewers' emphasis on trait-like descriptions (i.e., their construal of applicants' traits as a major reason for their decision making) and their emphasis on past and present performance (i.e., applicants' self-reported performance in previous jobs and the interviewers' judgment of their performance during the JI). From the evidence displayed in Table 2, one could argue that none of the interviewers subscribed to an implicit adaptability theory. Furthermore, most interviewers believed in the applicants' self-reports, and even those who may have doubted some part of applicants' self-reports still used the self-reports to infer stories about the applicants. Hence, applicant self-reports are fundamental in the JI setting. Later in this Discussion section, I will explore why this is problematic.

However, as mentioned in the Introduction section, it is very reasonable to cast doubt on the belief that traits are equally valid across different situations and over time. This was probably not an idiosyncratic belief that was held by the interviewers. In fact, I

asked some of the interviewers whether they believed that persons could change, and all of them replied "Yes." Nevertheless, when judging the applicants, they performed an implicit adaptability theory of persons. This makes sense, because it complies with the very purpose of JIs—to make a personality judgment that is supposedly accurate and non-changing. Nonetheless, the idea of transference seems to have been implicit and assumed, rather than explicit and discussed. In the few cases in which the interviewers explicitly considered why the applicants were what they experienced them to be, they rarely attributed the JI setting as a causal factor. Rather, they contributed other explanations—for instance an applicant's childhood experiences (e.g., as demonstrated by the employee in the hiring committee in JI no. 36). In a few cases, some of these trait descriptions were modified with contextual information, such as the special context of the JI, but most often they were not. However, the interviewers still had to select an applicant, and their judgments of applicants' traits seemed to form the basis of the selection, even when reservations were made. Hence, interviewers seemed to subscribe to an implicit entity theory of persons, and their applicant selection was influenced by this very person theory.

Why Did Interviewers Choose an Implicit Entity Theory of Persons?

> *"The assumptions embedded in implicit theories need not be accurate—especially as applied to each specific instance in which they guide behavior—to serve useful functions for individuals…"* (Detert & Edmondson, 2011, p. 463)

In a typical JI, the applicant's future close colleagues are rarely present or used as decision makers (Ryan et al., 1999). Furthermore, rating a person's actual job performance is a rather complex affair that should ideally involve observation of job performance, personal (job-related) experiences with the person, a working relationship with the person, and an evaluation of affection directed towards the person (Judge & Ferris, 1993)—to mention only a few criteria. Such an evaluation is more difficult, more costly, and more time consuming than a JI. This may be one of the reasons why so many employers still conduct traditional JIs.

One may ask whether, among the interviewers, a majority believed in an entity theory of persons. This would imply that the interviewers were a special kind of people, since, according to Dweck and Molden (2008), only half of us hold an implicit entity theory. Although the interviewers may, of course, have been a special kind of people, it seems more likely that the overwhelming finding of the entity theory view among the interviewers relates to the very nature of the JI setting. For instance, looking at a person's behavior and drawing situational inferences from it seems to be an effortful process and demands more cognitive resources than simply making dispositional inferences (Krull & Erickson, 1995). Hence, providing a good assessment is a difficult task, and interviewers must be aware of many conflicting demands, needs, and behaviors while simultaneously

listening intensively to an applicant. Furthermore, interviewers may, while interviewing, compare an applicant with previous applicants and his/her potential colleagues. Thus, assessment—especially in a JI setting—demands many cognitive resources. Subscribing to an implicit entity theory of persons seems to demand far fewer resources than subscribing to a theory of adaptability, and this may partially explain why the interviewers in this study subscribed to an entity theory of persons.

Furthermore, the JI setting may motivate an implicit entity theory of persons because interviewers may aim to "find the right traits." If they believe that applicants can change their way of being, then the idea of finding the right applicant becomes meaningless. The purpose of the traditional JI could help explain why there were so few reservations expressed in the interviewers' judgments. Hence, the JI setting may be seen as a frame that implicitly promotes the use of implicit entity person theories. Therefore, the implicit person theory, which the interviewers held, may have been determined by the very JI setting.

Another reason for the interviewers' subscription to an implicit entity theory could be that they did not see the JI as a special situation. Without viewing the JI as a special situation (i.e., a situation in which an applicant would act differently than he/she would in the job), interviewers would have found it easy to project their impressions of an applicant (obtained during the JI) onto the future job; hence, the interviewers' implicit entity theory could have been used to legitimize both the setting and their judgments. In addition to the reasons outlined above, the applicants may have also (co-)determined the interviewers' implicit person theories. They may have cared about performing in a way that made them seem consistent and coherent due to cultural ideals of forming good narratives (cf. Gergen, 1997). Thus, the interviewers may have heard many consistent narratives and started to believe that these narratives accurately described the applicants (see Davies and Harre's [1991] research, which investigates the large discrepancies between peoples' narratives and their actual behavior).

Potential Reservations

In this section I address some potential reservations of special concern that relate to my methodological framework and my assumptions of a changeable personality.

1. Is it really that good to be changeable? It may be psychologically beneficial for a person to be flexible and able to "switch" personality (Gergen, 1997; Goffman, 1959; Paulhus & Martin, 1988), adapt to new experiences, and change over time (Dweck, 2006; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). In addition, De Meuse, Dai, and Hallenbeck (2010) suggested that a failure to adapt could be one of the most common reasons for faulty leadership. However, Donahue, Robins, Roberts, and John (1993) argued that an integrated self-concept is linked to psychological well-being, and Maslow (1968) suggested that well-being is about independence from situational influences. The apparent disagreement

among researchers may be due to a variety of factors, such as different definitions of personality and self, different foci (e.g., behavior versus self-concept), different samples, research conducted in different epochs with different standards and different ideals, different understandings of what it means to be integrated, an unclear definition of a (good) degree of integration, or an unclear distinction between actual integration and perceived integration (i.e., when an individual prefers to see him/herself as integrated and stable, and doing so evokes good feelings though it stands in contrast to the way in which others see him/her).

The person theory literature suggests that subscribing to a malleable theory is more favorable than subscribing to an entity theory. Thus, applicants who subscribe to an implicit adaptation theory of persons could apparently be better selectors than those who subscribe to an entity theory. For instance, when recruiting managers, one should be aware that managers who hold a malleable person theory seem to have a better effect on performance appraisal, as they recognize both good and bad performance in employees without stigmatizing those employees (Heslin, Latham, & VandeWalle, 2005). People who hold an entity theory, on the other hand, seem to be restrictive when revising their impression of a person (Dweck, 1999). Moreover, when subscribing to an entity theory, people are more likely to adopt helpless attitudes to personal problems, and persons who hold a malleable theory are more likely to adopt mastery-oriented responses (Dweck et al., 1995), which are again correlated with better job performance (Judge & Bono, 2001). In addition, people who believe in the ability to change seem more open to learning and more persistent when facing challenging tasks (Dweck, 1999), and are thus higher performers. Hence, following this literature, selection of an applicant who performs in a way that is consistent with malleable theories of persons seems to represent a good choice.

2. Were the interviewers' statements the result of processes in which they accounted for context? One might argue that behind the interviewers' trait-like judgments were implicit, unarticulated, or subliminal considerations of the context's influence, or even an unarticulated idea that persons are adaptable. My data consisted only of what the interviewers said. This may be problematic, since much of people's behavior (e.g., their judgments) relies on processes that are not fully conscious (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001; Hassin, 2005; Westen, 1999). This means that the interviewers may very well have had a different idea of their judgment process than what they told me. However, this was exactly one of my reasons for interpreting their person theories as situational performances rather than general and consistent frameworks. Furthermore, in my interviews, I asked the interviewers about their contextual understanding of the applicants. Since they were professionals, one would expect that they—at least to some degree—would have been able to articulate such contextual considerations, had they found these important. Furthermore, my interviews took a dialogical approach, making it more likely that they would provide honest and open answers.

3. Subscribing to a specific implicit person theory is not a matter of either/or. As noted, people may change their person theory in accordance with the situation. According to Heslin and VandeWalle (2008, 2011), one's implicit entity theory of persons can be moderated. Thus, subscribing to a specific person theory within a given situation is not a matter of either/or. People probably tend to subscribe to a given person theory to a certain degree, and/or believe that some aspects are changeable while others are not. As an example, one of the employees in the hiring committee in JI no. 13 used both an adaptation and an entity theory of persons. He attributed the applicant's bad JI performance to his nervousness in the situation, while also attributing general traits to the applicant. Thus, situation may influence the implicit person theory that a person acts in accordance with.

Can My Data be Generalized?

The lack of a large sample size is often a fundamental critique of research (Asendorpf et al., 2013; Nosek, Spies, & Motyl, 2012). However, Flyvbjerg (2006) proposed parameters that could make generalization meaningful, despite the use of only a few cases. In the present study, the following aspects are relevant to generalization:

- Since the same sorts of tendencies—conveyed in the present study— were displayed in almost all of the cases, it is likely that they can be generalized. The size and type of the company, the position at stake, or whether there was only one or several interviewers, did not seem to impact the tendencies found in the present study. Hence, it is at least plausible that the same tendencies would be displayed in other JIs, as well.

- Across companies and across countries, the arrangement of the typical JI seems to share similar aspects: receipt of a resume and application prior to the JI, a duration of typically one hour, a manager or recruiting consultant acting as the lead interviewer, and perhaps three to eight applicants for each position. A typical JI is normally isolated from an applicant's other life circumstances, and takes place in a different situation than that of the working role. I point this out because entity theories of persons seem to be determined by the very arrangement, and purpose, of the JI. Hence, what happens in one JI, and the judgment process thereof, will likely occur in other JIs, insofar as they follow the same arrangement and purpose.

- I incorporated "expert cases" (i.e., recruitment agencies) in this study. Recruitment agencies are generally thought to be better at conducting selection processes than are other companies. However, I found no expressive or special difference between recruitment agencies and other companies. The assumption, in relation to generalization, is that if a company that objectively should be good at selection processes has

problems, it is likely that companies that do not have professional selection as their purpose will likewise have problems.

Impact on JIs and JI Research

The entire concept of the JI, as normally understood, builds on a basic assumption that applicants leave the JI just as they were prior to it. Furthermore, there is an assumption that, no matter what context the new job will be embedded in, successful applicants will most likely continue to be the person that the interviewer has selected. A more thorough emphasis on the impact of context in the JI seems to be important in the development of the JI. A few suggestions for JI development are given below.

Investigating applicants' person theories. If one does not want to significantly change the aim or purpose of the JI, one minor change could be in the content of investigation. Applicants' implicit person theories may tell interviewers a lot about the applicant's future (cf. Heslin & VandeWalle, 2011) and the way in which they evaluate and judge their customers, colleagues, and managers. Thus, one obvious aspect to investigate with an applicant is his/her implicit person theories in different situations.

Contextualized work sample cases. According to Schmidt and Hunter (1998), work sample tests have better predictive validity than most other selection procedures. Around 20 percent of the JIs in my sample used work-related cases. However, there were two types of cases: those in which the applicant was asked to imagine what he/she would do in a hypothetical situation and those in which the applicant was asked to perform an actual, specific task. The latter type of case is conceptually better than the former (Lievens & Patterson, 2011). By giving a case, interviewers may gain an impression of an applicant's task performance in a work-related context. Nevertheless, there are some shortcomings of this approach.

First, developing a good case is not easy. For instance, a good case may not be solvable by a single individual (but in a JI setting the applicant is usually alone). Furthermore, it may take a lot more time to solve the case and present it than is offered in a typical job interview. Due to these issues, interviewers must remove some of the complexities involved in solving cases. Second, an applicant's ability to solve a case does not tell interviewers anything about the applicant's motivation for solving the case; nor does it say anything about how the candidate will cooperate with colleagues or managers.

A good case—that is, a case that comes close to the actual work context of the new company—is of course a matter of degree, and contributes new perspectives on the applicant. Despite this criticism, giving a case is most likely better than not giving one in a JI setting.

Interviewing others instead of the applicant. Due to the potential lack of self-insight (Baumeister, Vohs, & Funder, 2007; Pronin, 2007, 2008) and the special incentives an applicant might have in a JI setting, interviewing persons other the applicant him/herself may be beneficial for the evaluation. This is supported by Schmidt and Hunter (1998) and Oh, Wang, and Mount (2011), although the latter did not use specific job cases to test their theory. A person's performance depends on how he/she is evaluated by important others (e.g., colleagues, managers, and/or customers). Integrating the impressions of important persons from an applicant's previous companies in the selection process also allows interviewers to gain much more contextual knowledge of the applicant. However, job interviews are typically concerned with only the applicant's self-reports, in the form of their application, resume, and verbal accounts during the JI (Lundmann, 2016). Ultimately, one could claim that interviewing an important person (e.g., a previous colleague) rather than the applicant him/herself would improve the selection's predictive validity.

Delegate decisions to the applicant's potential new colleagues. Normally, the manager, leader, or external recruitment officer has the strongest say in a JI. In panel interviews—which are especially common in the public sector—potential colleagues are sometimes invited to participate in the job interview. In the present study, 31 of the JIs were panel interviews, involving more than one interviewer. However, this did not affect the person theories in play, although more nuances sometimes appeared than in the interviews in which there was only one interviewer. A reason for this may be that potential colleagues usually do not decide anything (because they are subordinates), despite the fact that they would have the closest relationship with the applicant (if hired), regardless of whether the position is one of a leader, manager, or other colleague. By giving potential colleagues a larger say in the JI, the "ownership" of the selection—and therefore the co-responsibility of the candidate's success at the workplace— would probably increase.

There are many "right" applicants. It seems questionable whether it is possible to evaluate the degree of judgment accuracy. For instance, a consistent person is easier to judge than a non-consistent person (Colvin, 1993; Zuckerman, Bernieri, Koestner, & Rosenthal, 1989), but the interviewers in the present study did not investigate degree of consistency in the applicants. Furthermore, it would appear more appropriate to let someone who has worked with the applicant make the judgment (cf. the Introduction section concerning others' judgment). However, in the JI setting, the applicant's self-reports—manifested through their resume and verbal accounts—and behavior during the JI form the basis for the interviewer's judgment of him/her. However, even if different interviewers (in panel JIs) have access to the same data about the applicant, their judgments tend to differ (Lundmann, 2016). This makes accuracy questionable, because whose accuracy is correct? Hence, it makes little sense to categorize interviewers' judgments as accurate, or to evaluate a specific applicant's job performance, in light of one—or at most

a few—JIs. In addition, the notion of pragmatic accuracy states that we only need to know things about a person that are relevant to us (Gill & Swann, 2004), and this may actually not be very much, given that most persons have the potential to adapt. Thus, selecting a wrong applicant means selecting an applicant with a strong entity theory of persons, who acts in accordance with this theory (i.e., a person who cannot adapt or change, and who does not see malleability in others). Although interviewers' performance of person theories in their judgment processes may be problematic, this does not necessarily influence whether they choose the "right" applicant, because there is no such thing! This is because most people can change and adapt. This point brings in new perspectives that could influence staff selection in a variety of ways, and more research is needed to investigate this idea.

Revising the entire concept of the JI. In addition to the above, before interviewers perform an adaptation theory of persons, the aim of the JI should be changed. Construing the aim of the JI as creating applicants instead of finding the right applicant would give new perspectives to the JI and would also be in line with some of the research presented in the Introduction suggesting that people are indeed changeable. Actually, one might argue that a prerequisite for making a good selection is that the applicants are changeable and adaptable. Hence, the "good" interviewer would not be good because he/she knows how to select the "right" applicant. Instead, the good interviewer would be good at *preparing* the applicant for the coming job (e.g., by adjusting his/her ideas, motivations, and cultural understanding of the workplace) and able to construct certain ideas in the applicant about how to adapt and act in the company. In making this point, I also suggest that social obligations (or the "psychological contract") may be used to predict behavior (Turnley, Bolino, Lester, & Bloodgood, 2003) and are better at doing this than are fixed traits. According to Hunthausen, Truxillo, Bauer, and Hammer (2003) and Liden, Wayne, and Stilwell (1993), the relationship between a manager and subordinate is established within the first two weeks of their working together, and one might speculate whether the onset is the JI, especially in situations in which the interviewer is the manager of the position being recruited for. Although these points may seem intuitively reasonable, such a stance is hypothetical. To my knowledge, no research has yet viewed the JI as a creative, rather than descriptive, process.

Some implications for JI research. In terms of research, one may speculate that the fact that different applicants have different implicit person theories may partially explain why researchers sometimes observe different levels of predictive validity in different selection methods (for instance, Van Iddekinge, Sager, Burnfield, and Heffner [2006] found considerable variations in the predictive validity of structured JIs). However, more research on applicants' implicit person theories and their impact on selection and job performance is needed.

Changing the focus of interest in JI research could contribute new insights. Today, most studies are concerned with what applicants or interviewers do during the JI, not what the JI does with them. In a certain sense, one could see the JI as an "agent" that partially causes certain behavior in the interviewer and the applicant. Law (2004) argues that methods used to investigate an object (here: the JI as a method to investigate the applicant) simultaneously construct the object (in this case, theories of the applicant's person). However, the implications of such a perspective need more research.

Perspectives

Investigation of implicit person theories is not only interesting in a JI setting. Much of what goes on when interviewers judge applicants occurs in other situations, as well. For instance, on a romantic date, each partner judges his or her counterpart. Much of this judgment relates to future situations: "Can we live well together as a couple?" "Is he/she the right one to have kids with?" "Can we have fun together?" Any such prediction is only possible if one holds an implicit entity theory of persons in the situation. Without holding such a theory, a person would probably do something other than meet up in an artificial situation—say at a café—in which nothing of what happens can be directly transferred into a future relationship situation.

In addition to the many daily situations that involve the judgment of persons, the work of many researchers in the social sciences depends on the researchers' adherence to an implicit person theory. This is particularly true for researchers whose primary aim is to predict behavior. In order to predict a person's behavior, one must assume the stability of that person over time and reduce one's belief in the (unpredictable) influence of context on that person; otherwise, prediction would not be possible. While I am sure that most researchers would agree that people can change, their methods and purposes (i.e., prediction) generally rely on an implicit person theory. Some researchers may argue that "We can indeed predict, and hence persons must be fairly stable!" However, many predictions concern rather abstract phenomena such as *the probability that I will be healthy in two years' time*. Not many, if any, scientific predictions concern situations such as *what Peter and Mary will do tomorrow at 1pm*. I have never seen any successful concrete predictions, and one might speculate whether the purpose of prediction is faulty and should be substituted with other purposes, such as the purpose of creating or influencing people. I believe that this discussion is very interesting, but it is, however, better suited for another article.

Conclusion

The impressions that interviewers gain of an applicant in a JI have a great impact. Underneath these impressions are certain implicit person theories indicating a belief that persons are stable entities. Interviewers' entity theories of persons can be derived from their judgments of the applicants and are seen, for instance, in their extensive use of trait-

like descriptions of applicants. Assumptions about the generalizability of behavior from the JI context to the job being recruited for are implicitly inherent in the typical JI setting. Although interviewers' person theories have a decisive impact on the final selection of applicant, these theories are not in accordance with more socio-cultural approaches to persons. The big question is: Why is this so? When asking people (including interviewers) about whether context matters for people's performances, most answer "Yes." When judging an applicant in a JI setting, interviewers nevertheless react as if context does not matter. I suggest that the JI setting contributes to interviewers' performances of an implicit belief about persons. As a theoretical contribution, this study suggests that implicit person theories are not merely inner beliefs, but performances from which an apparent belief can be inferred. These beliefs seem to be formed by the setting in which they take place.

Due to both applicants' motivations and the lack of contextual information about applicants, it seems impossible for interviewers to make an accurate judgment of applicants. It is suggested that changing interviewers' person theories would require a different JI setting and an acknowledgement that good candidates are not entities to be found, but persons who can be created.

Finally, the implicit entity theory of persons seems to be embedded in many places beyond JIs. Romantic dates, for example, share many features with JIs, and assumptions that stem from an implicit entity theory of persons also occur in these scenarios. Further, much research seems to depend on an implicit entity theory of persons, despite all of its problems.

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