

from $\bar{r} = .10$ to $\bar{r} = .20$).²⁴ This is not surprising given the rudimentary informally collected in application blanks. Another factor that may undermine the validity of application blanks is distortion. Evidence suggests that about one-third of the investigations into the backgrounds of applicants suggested that misrepresentation occurred on the application blank. Subsequent studies have suggested that the most common questions that are misrepresented include previous salary, education, tenure on previous job, and reasons for leaving previous job. Some individuals even go beyond misrepresentation to outright invention. One study revealed that 15% of supposedly previous employers of applicants indicated that the individual had never worked for them.²⁵ Thus, as with résumés, application information that is weighted heavily in selection decisions should be verified.

The validity evidence for weighted application blanks is much more positive.²⁶ In a sense, this would almost have to be true since items in the weighted application blank are scored and weighted according to their ability to predict job performance. Thus, as long as *some* of the items are predictive, the scoring and weighting schemes embedded in the weighted application blank will ensure that the overall score is predictive. Because the process used to develop the weighted application blank is time-consuming and expensive, more cost-benefit studies need to be conducted. Is the validity worth the cost? Unfortunately, there is little recent research on the weighted application blank, so answering this question is difficult.

The relatively poor validity of unweighted application blanks also should not be taken as an indication that they are useless in selection decisions. Unweighted application blanks are a very inexpensive means of collecting basic information on job applicants. Most organizations use unweighted application blanks only for initial screening decisions (to rule out applicants who are obviously unqualified for the job). As long as application blanks are used in this context (and not relied on to a significant degree in making substantive hiring decisions), they can be useful for making initial decisions about applicants. Thus, it is not necessarily appropriate to condemn unweighted application blanks based on a criterion for which they are rarely used.

Biographical Information

Biographical information, often called biodata, is personal history information on an applicant's background and interests. Results from a biodata survey provide a general description of a person's life history. The principal assumption behind the use of biodata is the axiom "The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior." These past behaviors may reflect ability or motivation.

Like application blanks, biographical information blanks ask applicants to report on their background. Responses to both of these questionnaires can provide useful information in making initial selection decisions about applicants. Unlike application blanks, however, biographical information can also be fruitfully used for substantive selection decisions. In fact, if scores on a biodata inventory are