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The Job Interview and Cognitive Performance: Does Structure Reduce Performance on Selection Batteries, and Can Explanation of Purpose Improve It?

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The job interview is a tool used by almost all organizations today to assist in selecting high-performing employees (McCarthy, Van Iddekinge, & Campion, 2010). However, as with any interpersonal process, the interview is susceptible to bias (Barrick, Swider, & Stewart, 2010; Swider, Barrick, Harris, & Stoverink, 2011). As one solution, research has supported that incorporating structure into the interview can reduce bias (Kutcher & Bragger, 2004), thereby increasing its ability to predict job performance (McCarthy et al., 2010). Yet, there is also evidence that highly structured interviews may be met with negative reactions from candidates, in part because they perceive they are less able to control the interview's content or outcomes (Chapman & Rowe, 2002; Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Hysong & Dipboye, 1998). On the one hand, this lack of control could help to increase the validity of the job interview by reducing an applicant's ability to manipulate answers and manage impressions. On the other hand, the reduced sense of control can increase anxiety, thereby suppressing episodic memory and compromising performance (Deffenbacher, 1994; Lachman & Agrigoroaei, 2012). A large body of research also suggests that this reduction in performance is likely to be larger for groups historically stereotyped in the domains being assessed

Structuring job interviews is a method of decreasing bias and increasing the predictive validity of job performance, but research suggests that applicants can react negatively to structure (Chapman & Zweig, 2005) and that negative attitudes about selection tools can predict performance (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). The current exploratory study investigates how structuring the job interview in conjunction with priming the ethnicity and sex of the applicant, and in some conditions providing an explanation of the structure, affected post-interview cognitive ability performance. Three levels of structure were randomly assigned. Those who experienced a structured interview without an explanation of its purpose scored lower than those who experienced an unstructured interview, but those who experienced a structured interview with an explanation of its purpose did not score lower than those who experienced an unstructured interview. Scores differed for females and Hispanics depending on the structure condition, but not in the same manner. Implications for recruitment, selection, and performance management are discussed.

(Nguyen & Ryan, 2008; Steele, 1997). The purpose of the current study was to investigate whether structuring the job interview when sex and ethnicity are primed influences performance on a subsequent cognitive ability test, whether the reduction of performance is larger for individuals who are typically stereotyped in domains assessed in the interview and selection battery, and whether providing applicants with an explanation of the structured interview can improve this performance.

The Job Interview

In applicant selection, the job interview serves multiple purposes: it is utilized to predict job performance of the applicants, to attract candidates to the organization, and to determine fit into the position and organization (Chapman & Rowe, 2002). Research has demonstrated that the verbal and nonverbal social interaction that is typical of the job interview can influence applicants' feelings about the organization and about how they themselves will fit into the organization (Kutcher, Bragger, & Masco, 2013).

The job interview as a social process. From a recruitment perspective, the social nature of the job interview allows the interviewer to communicate the benefits of the organization and to assess how the applicant would fit into the culture of the organization. The social nature of the job interview can also be useful in selecting candidates; personality traits and verbal abilities, which are often predictive of job performance, may be assessed during a free exchange of information (Degroot & Gooty, 2009). However, research on the social psychology of interpersonal exchanges suggests that the social interaction in the job interview can result in biases and stereotypes that influence its effectiveness. Logel et al. (2009) found that in one-on-one interpersonal interactions, each person assumes the other is judging him or her based on salient stereotypes—that is, verbal and nonverbal communication in the job interview can induce perceptions of bias and discrimination based on past experiences and influence applicant performance and applicant and organizational decision making.

Signaling theory posits that in the absence of more information, candidates will look to whatever information is available when forming their opinions about a potential employer (Spence, 1973), suggesting that applicants may assume that the biases interviewers communicate, even unintentionally, may hold true for the entire organization. Given its interpersonal nature, what happens in the job interview is likely to influence how applicants feel about the organization as well as their anxiety about and trust in the entire selection process. Depending on when in the selection process the interview takes place, there are meaningful implications for the organization. For many multiphase selection systems, it may not be unusual for interviews to take place throughout the process (e.g., early screening interviews, interviews with hiring managers, final interviews with leaders). Perceptions from interviews late in the process may affect

candidates' job-choice decisions and initial work experiences, while perceptions from interviews early in the process may affect candidates' performance on any other selection activities (Hausknecht et al., 2004).

Structure and the job interview. Structure has been viewed as a solution to bias in the job interview (Huffcutt, Culbertson, & Weyhrauch, 2014). An interview's structure can be defined as the decision-making discretion the interviewer is granted (Motowidlo et al., 1992), with more highly structured interviews providing more systematic procedures for eliciting job-related information from the candidate and for evaluating and making decisions. Chapman and Zweig (2005) found that structure could be best categorized into four dimensions: (1) question consistency, (2) evaluation standardization, (3) question sophistication, and (4) rapport building. Structured interviews vary in terms of whether they are structured through one or all of these dimensions, and each of these dimensions could be considered on a continuum from nonexistent to very high.

There are mixed findings in the literature regarding the effects of interview structure on outcomes. Primarily, structured interviews correlated more highly with job performance (e.g., Huffcutt, Culbertson, & Weyhrauch, 2014). Other research has shown that demographic differences between interviewer and interviewee do not influence applicant evaluations in a highly structured interview (McFarland, Ryan, Sacco, & Kriska, 2004; Sacco, Scheu, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2003). Alternatively, it has been found that structured interview evaluations remain vulnerable to individual difference factors of both applicant and interviewer (Van Iddekinge, Raymark, Eidson, William, & Attenweiler 2004). In addition, the empirical evidence collected on applicant reactions to interview structure suggests that applicants typically react negatively to highly structured interviews (Chapman & Rowe, 2002; Latham & Finnegan, 1993). Chapman & Zweig (2005) found that highly structured interviews were perceived to be more difficult by applicants and that the lack of rapport building in highly structured interviews was negatively related to interviewee reactions. Other research investigating reactions to the various methods of structuring the interview has found that applicants react more negatively to behavioral and situational questions than to general ones (Conway & Penano, 1999), feel less attracted to organizations when they experience a structured interview (Hysong & Dipboye, 1998), and find certain aspects of structure to be less procedurally fair (Chapman & Rowe, 2002).

Hausknecht, et al. (2004) found applicant perceptions of the selection process to be related to performance on the selection tools, suggesting applicants' reactions to and anxiety regarding certain selection tools could affect their performance on those tools and tools administered subsequently. The job interview is an anxiety-invoking process (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004), and structuring the interview, which involves actions such as having the interviewer take notes (or record responses) and rate answers provided by the candidates, could increase the salience of feeling

judged and, therefore, also increase evaluation apprehension. In some instances of structured interviews, the interviewer may explain the purpose of these elements; in others, however, it may not be made explicit or clear. When interviews are structured, applicants are likely to feel less able to manage impressions and to control outcomes (Barrick et al., 2010; Swider et al., 2011); research in neuropsychology finds that lack of control can lead to poorer performance, as the state of anxiety tends to suppress episodic memory (Lachman, & Agrigoroaei, 2012). Furthermore, as structured interviews place a great degree of cognitive load on the interviewee (e.g., Van Iddekinge, Raymark, & Roth, 2005), it is feasible that the negative effect on performance may extend from the interview itself to other activities, especially when they are cognitively-laden, such as tests of mental ability. Such a performance decrement could influence the recruitment, selection, and retention of qualified individuals.

It is well recognized that selection systems are more complete when they include multiple tests that cover multiple competencies. Hence, it would be valuable for research questions to explore how candidate performance on some tests may affect performance on subsequent tests—especially when tests are administered close in time. Given the research on how structure influences perceptions of control and procedural fairness of the process (Barrick et al., 2010; Swider et al., 2011), and the research on the influence of anxiety, self-efficacy, and confidence on test performance (Lachman & Agrigoroaei, 2012), an initial exploratory study was designed to investigate the effects of structuring the job interview on cognitive test performance subsequent to the job interview. We predict the following:

Hypothesis 1: In the context of a selection system in which the interview occurs before further performance assessment assessing stereotype-threatened domains, participants who experience the structured interview will score lower than participants who experience the unstructured interview on a cognitive-ability selection test taken after the interview.

Sex, Ethnicity, and Stereotypes in the Job Interview

Research by Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby (2008) found that individuals who are at risk for devaluation based on group membership are sensitive to cues that signal social identity stereotypes, and that these individuals often distrust the setting where these cues have been communicated. Stereotypes regarding performance in various job-related domains along with past discrimination at work and in other social arenas are likely to make the job-search process even more anxiety-provoking for women and minorities (Kirnan, Alfieri, Bragger, & Harris, 2009). Many women and minorities have experienced discrimination or stereotyping in the workplace, and many of the areas where females and minorities have felt stereotyped may be asked about

in a job interview (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Examples for women include management and leadership (Bergeron, Block, & Echtenkamp, 2006; Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005) as well as problem solving, math, and science (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2003). Examples for ethnic minorities include verbal abilities (especially for ethnic minorities for whom English might not be their first language; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010) and general cognitive ability (Brown & Day, 2006). The stereotype-threat literature suggests that if the applicant's race or sex is mentioned or "primed" in conjunction with evaluating these stereotyped areas, that could increase anxiety and negative feelings about the fairness of the interview and the selection system and could ultimately affect performance (Ambady, Paik, Steele, Owen-Smith, & Mitchell, 2004; Oswald & Harvey, 2000). In a meta-analysis of stereotype-threat effects, Nguyen and Ryan (2008) found that subtle and moderate stereotype-threat-activating mechanisms result in relatively large effects on performance in stereotype-threatened domains. Roberson and Kulik (2007) agree that women and minorities' life long experiences of being stereotype threatened in work-related domains can result in situations in which relatively brief and even seemingly benign experiences as applicants and employees can activate stereotype threat and reduce performance.

Interview structure and stereotype threat. In the stereotype-threat arena, research has most consistently focused on cognitive ability as the domain threatened for minorities and females (Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev, 2003; Steele, 1997; Steele, Spencer, & Aronson, 2002). It has been suggested that although it is not the primary purpose, interviews do indeed tap into cognitive ability (Huffcutt, Roth, & McDaniel, 1996). Furthermore, the various elements of structured interviews (e.g., behavioral and situational questions, rating scales, note-taking, prohibiting of questions from the interviewee) can be taken as cues by victims of previous discrimination that judgments regarding cognitive ability and other stereotyped domains are occurring. Hence, in the absence of contradictory information and when ethnicity and sex are mentioned or primed, past victims of stereotype and discrimination are likely to interpret these cues as additional stereotyping (Wout, Danso, Jackson, & Spencer, 2008) and may experience performance deficits during and after the interview. This is especially true if the people who are interacting with the applicants during the interview process continue to interact with the applicant (or employee) during later assessment as an applicant or employee. We therefore predict:

In the absence of contradictory information and when ethnicity and sex are mentioned or primed, past victims of stereotype and discrimination are likely to interpret these cues as additional stereotype and experience performance deficits during and after the interview.

Hypothesis 2: In the context of a selection system in which the interview occurs before further performance assessment assessing stereotype-threatened domains, females and Hispanics who experience the structured interview will score significantly lower

on a subsequent cognitive ability test than females and Hispanics who experience the unstructured interview, and this difference will be larger than it is for white males.

Providing an explanation of structure. In many structured interviews, the purpose of structure in increasing fairness and job relatedness is not explained to applicants. Truxillo, Bauer, Campion, and Paronto (2002) conducted a field investigation of applicant reactions to selection procedures; they found that providing information about the job-relatedness of interview structure resulted in more positive evaluations of the structured interview for minority applicants. In non-structured job interviews, it can often be the case that the reasons behind the interview in general, and specific questions in particular, are not explained to applicants but applicants understand they must present their “best impression” to the interviewer (Motowidlo et al., 1992). The same general understanding may be held for structured interviews, but it is not common knowledge that the job interview is structured to increase predictive validity and decrease bias. Without any explanation or rationale for the structure, the various “cues” (e.g., reduced rapport, complex questions, interviewer note-taking and form-completing) make the experience feel especially evaluative and difficult. Alternatively, if the purpose of structure is explained, this could maintain the applicant’s sense of control, and inform him or her that such steps are being taken to reduce non-job-related evaluation and improve fairness; this may increase efficacy about performance during the job interview and on subsequent assessments.

In addition, providing information regarding the purpose of structure can assure candidates that they will indeed be evaluated according to job qualifications, rather than on historical stereotypes about sex, race, or ethnicity. Wout and colleagues (2008) suggest that individuals who have been judged according to stereotypes enter into future interpersonal situations assessing whether there is the possibility of being judged according to a stereotype. The “cues” introduced in structured interviews may increase women and minority job candidates’ perceived probability of being stereotyped in the job interview. Providing information on the actual fairness-related purpose of the structure, especially by the person who is doing the evaluating, could provide contradictory evidence to the idea that they are being stereotyped, reduce the suspicion that they are being stereotyped again, and improve performance in stereotyped domains during and after the interview. We therefore predict:

Hypothesis 3: In the context of a selection system where the interview occurs before further performance assessment assessing stereotype-threatened domains, participants who experience the structured interview with an explanation of the purpose of structuring the interview will *not* score significantly lower on the subsequent cognitive-ability selection test than participants who experience the unstructured interview.

Hypothesis 3a: In the context of a selection system where the interview occurs before further performance assessment assessing stereotype-threatened domains, females and Hispanics who experience the structured interview with an explanation of the purpose of structuring the interview will *not* score significantly lower on the subsequent cognitive ability selection test than females and ethnic minorities who experience the unstructured interview, and males will continue not to score differently.

Method

Participants

We recruited 172 applicants from a medium-sized university in the northeast United States through the use of an online participant recruitment system and from classes where the professors were willing to offer extra credit. The student body at this institution is 66% female and 33% male, and 30 percent of the students are racial and ethnic minorities. Eighty-six (50%) of the participants were Hispanic, and 86 (50%) were white. Eighty-five (49.4%) were male, and 87 (50.6%) were female. The mean age was 23 years old, and respondents ranged in age from 18 to 32. All participants had work experience with a mean of 6.24 years and a range of 1 to 15 years. Seventy-seven percent of participants were currently employed.

Procedure

Participants were told in the recruitment message that researchers were conducting a study on factors that enable them to predict whether or not students would reach educational and career goals. Those who were interested emailed the research assistant and were sent a web link to a consent form and a short application-like survey that collected demographic information (race, ethnicity, sex, age), employment information, college major, and educational and career goals. This “application” was used to collect necessary demographic information, but in a way that seemed to mirror what would happen in an actual selection experience. To create a realistic context closely resembling an employment interview, where participants believed they were actually being evaluated in a social-identity–relevant manner, participants were invited to participate in an interview that would “help to predict their chances of reaching their educational goals and their chances of reaching subsequent career goals.” Participants were randomly assigned to a structure condition (unstructured, structured without explanation, structured with explanation); they were scheduled a time and location (at least 72 hours after the application submission) for the interview with the research assistant. A white male graduate assistant met each participant and introduced himself as the interviewer. Participants were asked to read and sign a consent form

and were ushered into an office-like setting where they were invited to sit across the desk from the interviewer.

The interviewer briefly explained what would happen in the interview, the purpose of the interview, and, in the “structured with explanation” condition, the purpose of the structured interview. The interviewer then followed a (memorized) script to ask the participants interview questions. Participants were asked questions about their educational history and choice of major, academic and cognitive strengths and weaknesses, ability to work in teams, goal-setting ability, perseverance in the face of obstacles, leadership ability, and time-management skills, because these constructs are clearly valid with respect to success in graduate school and many different career paths. Leadership ability and cognitive ability are also stereotyped domains for women and ethnic minorities.

Interview structure was manipulated within the interview and is discussed in more detail subsequently. Ethnicity and sex were primed by mentioning participants’ ethnicity and sex with respect to mentoring opportunities; the interviewer discussed how a mentor of the same ethnicity and sex as the individual often helps to model success in reaching one’s chosen goals, especially in situations where various groups are underrepresented. At the end of the interview, participants were asked to complete a brief survey on how much anxiety they felt during the interview and were told that a cognitive-ability assessment was the next stage of the prediction process. The interviewer read the directions for the cognitive-ability tests to the participants. After participants completed both the job interview and the cognitive-ability test, we asked them to complete a final survey, which assessed the manipulation of the structure variable and also asked some questions about their perceptions of the experience. The researcher then debriefed the participants.

Independent Variables

Structure. Three levels of structure were manipulated in the job interview, and participants were randomly assigned to a structure condition.

(1) *Structured without explanation of the purpose.* In this condition, the job interview was structured by asking participants the same questions, in the same way, and in the same order (question consistency), asking participants behavioral and situational questions (question sophistication), taking notes on their answers (evaluation standardization), telling participants that their answers would be evaluated according to specific criteria-related guidelines (evaluation standardization), eliminating non-job-relevant discussion (rapport building), and asking participants to hold all questions until the end of the interview (rapport building). Participants in this condition were told that they were part of a structured interview where “all applicants are being asked the same questions (question consistency) and will be assessed according to the same guidelines (evaluation standardization),” that the interviewer would take notes only about their specific answers to the questions

(evaluation standardization), and that sometimes he or she will be asked “questions about situations he or she has been in to assess knowledge or experiences he or she has gained. Other times he or she may be asked about what he or she *would* do in a particular situation (question sophistication).”

(2) Structured with explanation of the purpose. The interview was structured using the same methods described previously. In addition, these participants were told, “The purpose of the structured interview is to concentrate on asking you questions that relate specifically to the area you are interviewing for. The idea is that when we ask only specific questions related to your educational and career goals and take notes about only the responses that you give, the process is fair and we can reduce some of the bias that sometimes can be found in the interview. We wish to be fair and unbiased and to be as accurate as we can in predicting how someone will do on the job or in the educational program that they are interviewing for.”

(3) No structure. In this condition, we asked about the same constructs as in the structured interviews, but the interview was not structured using the methods listed previously. Questions were asked more conversationally, not in behavioral and situational formats and in no particular order. It is important to note that the question content was held constant by the interviewer, but in a way that would seem less deliberate and controlled. Note-taking was not discussed, nor was evaluation of questions. Participants were not instructed to hold their questions, and no mention was made of structure.

Sex. Sex was a non-manipulated independent variable in this research study used to compare overall cognitive ability scores and numeric ability scores (mathematical ability is a domain in which females are often stereotyped against) in structured and unstructured conditions.

Ethnicity. Ethnicity (Hispanic or Caucasian participants) was a non-manipulated independent variable in this research study used to compare cognitive ability scores, a domain Hispanics are often stereotyped against in structured and unstructured conditions.

Control Variables.

Interview anxiety. To determine whether anxiety levels were a factor in the reduced performance in the different interview structure conditions, participants were asked to complete McCarthy & Goffin’s (2004) measure of anxiety in selection interviews (MASI), which has five scales of interview anxiety (communication, appearance, social, performance, and behavioral). The scale is reported to have acceptable levels of internal consistency (alpha ranging from .69–.82) and construct validity.

GPA, as self-reported in the “application” phase of the selection process, was used as a control variable or as a proxy for baseline scores on the differential aptitude test (DAT) because of its relationship to cognitive ability. In the application, we provided GPA answer options in ranges (e.g., 0–1.0, 1.1–1.5, 1.6–2.0, etc.).

Manipulation Checks

Structure. The degree to which participants perceived the level of structure in the job interview was assessed by asking participants to respond to the following question:

“Interviews differ on how structured they are. In a structured interview, all interviewees are asked the same questions from a list of questions. The interviewer is careful to *take notes* about your answers and *score your answers* without asking too many probing questions or engaging in conversation. In an unstructured interview, an interviewer uses more discretion and uses his or her conversational skills to learn more about you. How would you describe the interview you experienced on a four-point scale with a 1 = very structured and a 4 = not at all structured?”

Dependent Variables

DATs for personnel selection. After completing the job interview, participants were asked to complete the DAT for personnel selection. The DAT is a cognitive-ability test developed and widely used for assessment and placement. It has been adapted and validated for personnel selection and is widely used in the selection process (Bennett, Seashore, & Wesman, 1990). It includes various sub tests that were created and validated to be used either all together or separately. For this experiment, we used the verbal and numeric reasoning sections of the DAT, which were developed for and are marketed as more general-aptitude assessments. We used these subtests because (1) general cognitive ability is an area where minorities suffer from stereotype threat and these two sections are a measure of general cognitive ability, (2) females suffer from stereotype threat in the area of mathematical reasoning, and (3) these skill sets would have the “business necessity” relationship to job performance suggested to participants in the “structured with explanation” interview condition. The DAT is a timed test with 20-minute time limits per section (numeric reasoning and verbal reasoning). The original DAT was shortened from its original time limits (25 minutes for verbal reasoning and 30 minutes for numeric reasoning) to 20 minutes for each section for marketing and use as selection tests (Bragger & Becker, 2005). Individuals had a total of 36 verbal items and 32 numeric items to complete, with total scores on the test ranging from 0 to 36 correct for the verbal section, 0 to 32 correct for the numeric section, and 0 to 68 correct for the two sections together. The reliability for both verbal and numeric sections of the test was acceptable with a Cronbach α for the verbal section of .86 and for the numeric section of .78. Reliability did not differ greatly by gender or ethnicity for the verbal sections (α for males = .89, α for females = .80, α for Hispanics = .86, α for Caucasians = .85) or numeric sections (α for males = .80, α for females = .73, α for Hispanics = .79, α for Caucasians = .76). These estimates are similar to those reported by the Psychological Corporation. While norms are not reported for the DAT for the personnel selection test, they are reported for gender for the DAT

aptitude test (similar to the personnel selection test with fewer items). In past versions, females have scored lower on the numeric versions of the test, but it is reported (and norms indicate) that they do not do so in the current version of the DAT. While the normative data provided for the DAT does not break down norms by ethnicity or race, nor are statistical differences in scoring reported, the overall means for all participants in all conditions were similar to the norms reported in the norms booklet (Bragger & Becker, 2005).

Results

Manipulation checks. Results indicated that participants experiencing the structured interview without explanation of purpose rated the interview as more structured ($M = 1.36$) than participants in the unstructured interview condition ($M = 1.9$, $t(96) = 2.97$, $p = .00$, one-tailed, where lower scores were indicative of higher perceived structure), and that participants experiencing the structured interview with explanation ($M = 1.39$) rated the interview as significantly more structured than those experiencing the unstructured interview ($M = 1.9$, $t(93) = 2.3$, $p = .00$, one-tailed). These results indicate that participants in the unstructured interview condition perceived the interview as less structured than participants in both structured interview conditions.

Mean Differences in Cognitive Ability Performance and Interview Anxiety

Means and standard deviations for overall (verbal and numeric) and numeric-only scores on the cognitive ability test (the DAT) by sex, ethnicity, and structure conditions are reported in Table 1 and Table 2, respectively, and for interview anxiety in Table 3. Male participants scored higher overall on the DAT and on the numeric section of the DAT than did female participants, and white participants scored higher than Hispanic participants. Participants experiencing the unstructured interview scored highest overall, followed by participants who experienced the structured interview with an explanation, and then by participants who experienced the structured interview without an explanation.

Because our hypotheses predicted that some, but not all, of the structure conditions would differ from one another, and because many of our hypotheses predicted differences between structure conditions within levels of other independent variables (cell differences by sex and ethnicity), it was necessary that we conduct focused, planned *t*-tests to test our hypotheses, and we could not test our hypotheses using factorial analyses of variance (ANOVAs). However, we conducted two 3x2x2 ANOVAs to investigate the effects of the independent variables of sex, ethnicity, and structure condition on DAT scores and two Analysis of CoVariance (ANCOVA) (for overall and numeric DAT scores) to assess whether controlling for interview anxiety influenced results.

TABLE 1 OVERALL DAT MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY STRUCTURE, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY

ETHNICITY	GENDER	N	UNSTRUCTURED		STRUCTURED WITHOUT EXPLANATION		STRUCTURED WITH EXPLANATION	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Caucasian	Male	41	37.500	3.096	34.538	3.096	34.500	3.096
	Female	45	36.429	2.984	28.813	2.791	39.933	2.882
	Overall	86	36.964	2.150	31.675	2.084	37.217	2.115
Hispanic	Male	44	35.000	2.984	29.900	2.882	28.321	2.984
	Female	42	31.750	2.984	26.607	2.984	23.679	2.984
	Overall	86	33.375	2.110	28.254	2.074	26.000	2.110
Overall	Male	85	36.250	2.150	32.219	2.115	31.411	2.150
	Female	87	34.084	2.110	27.710	2.043	31.806	2.074

TABLE 2 NUMERIC DAT MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY STRUCTURE, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY

ETHNICITY	GENDER	N	UNSTRUCTURED		STRUCTURED WITHOUT EXPLANATION		STRUCTURED WITH EXPLANATION	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Caucasian	Male	41	17.692	1.311	14.462	1.311	15.692	1.311
	Female	45	13.571	1.264	10.750	1.182	16.200	1.221
	Overall	86	15.632	.911	12.606	.883	15.946	.896
Hispanic	Male	44	14.500	1.264	13.000	1.221	14.571	1.264
	Female	42	13.071	1.264	11.857	1.264	9.714	1.264
	Overall	86	13.786	.894	12.429	.879	12.143	.894
Overall	Male	85	16.096	.911	13.731	.896	15.132	.911
	Female	87	13.321	.894	11.304	.865	12.957	.879

TABLE 3 OVERALL INTERVIEW ANXIETY MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS BY STRUCTURE, GENDER, AND ETHNICITY

ETHNICITY	GENDER	N	UNSTRUCTURED		STRUCTURED WITHOUT EXPLANATION		STRUCTURED WITH EXPLANATION	
			M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Caucasian	Male	41	2.11	.47	1.86	.42	2.55	.69
	Female	45	2.69	.61	2.71	.61	2.41	.56
	Overall	86	2.49	.63	2.51	.67	2.49	.62
Hispanic	Male	44	2.28	.71	2.29	.65	2.48	.71
	Female	42	2.49	.61	2.62	.67	2.46	.61
	Overall	86	2.54	.56	2.46	.67	2.55	.56
Overall	Male	85	2.22	.51	2.17	.61	2.50	.68
	Female	87	2.75	.49	2.67	.62	2.64	.55

As reported in Tables 4 and 5, results of the ANOVAs indicated a significant main effect of structure on both overall cognitive-ability test scores and numeric-ability scores, as well as a significant main effect of ethnicity on overall and numeric DAT scores. Sex was significant for numeric DAT but not for overall DAT scores. The two-way interactions of sex and structure, sex and ethnicity, and ethnicity and structure were not significant for overall or numeric DAT scores. There was a significant three-way interaction of sex, ethnicity, and structure for numeric ability scores but not for overall DAT scores.

As reported in Tables 6 and 7, when two ANVOCA were conducted to determine the effects of the IVs controlling for interview anxiety, structure was no longer significant for either overall or numeric DAT scores. Ethnicity was still significant for both scores, sex was still significant for the numeric score, and there was a significant interaction of sex and ethnicity on overall DAT scores. The three-way interaction was no longer significant.

TABLE 4 OVERALL DAT ANOVA

SOURCE	DF	F	P
Structured Condition	2	3.225*	.042
Gender	1	1.546	.216
Ethnicity	1	12.665**	.000
Structure × Gender	2	.684	.506
Structure × Ethnicity	2	2.248	.109
Gender × Ethnicity	1	.958	.329
Structure × Gender × Ethnicity	2	1.140	.323
Error	157		

Note. *indicate significance at the $p < 0.05$ level; **indicate significance at the $p < .01$ level.

TABLE 5 NUMERIC DAT ANOVA

SOURCE	DF	F	P
Structured Condition	2	3.197*	.044
Gender	1	11.384**	.001
Ethnicity	1	7.103**	.009
Structure × Gender	2	.056	.945
Structure × Ethnicity	2	2.088	.127
Gender × Ethnicity	1	.001	.981
Structure × Gender × Ethnicity	2	3.335*	.038
Error	157		

Note. *indicate significance at the $p < 0.05$ level; **indicate significance at the $p < .01$ level.

Hypothesis Tests

We conducted planned-comparison *t*-tests because they were necessary to test our specific hypotheses; we predicted focused differences between two specific conditions (Hypothesis 1: DAT scores in structure without explanation vs. unstructured interview conditions) but not between other conditions (Hypothesis 3: DAT scores in structured with explanation vs. unstructured conditions) of the same variable. We investigated differences (or predicted non-differences) within each gender-ethnicity combination (Hypotheses 2 and 3a). Because these were focused comparisons of groups or of particular cells, omnibus ANOVAs/ANCOVAs or linear post-hoc analyses would not accurately test our hypotheses and were exploratory in nature. Because we ran *t*-tests to test specific hypotheses, we could not use statistical analyses to treat our control variables (self-reported GPA and anxiety about job interviews) on the dependent variables. We conducted Mann–Whitney

TABLE 6 OVERALL DAT ANOVA WITH INTERVIEW ANXIETY COVARIATE

SOURCE	DF	F	P
Structured Condition	2	1.579	.210
Gender	1	.004	.950
Ethnicity	1	4.573*	.034
Structure × Gender	2	.306	.737
Structure × Ethnicity	2	2.654	.074
Gender × Ethnicity	1	3.807*	.053
Structure × Gender × Ethnicity	2	.312	.732
Error	129		

Note. *indicate significance at the $p < 0.05$ level.

TABLE 7 NUMERIC DAT ANOVA WITH INTERVIEW ANXIETY COVARIATE

SOURCE	DF	F	P
Structured Condition	2	2.479	.088
Gender	1	8.890**	.003
Ethnicity	1	5.041*	.026
Structure × Gender	2	.291	.748
Structure × Ethnicity	2	2.246	.110
Gender × Ethnicity	1	.025	.875
Structure × Gender × Ethnicity	2	2.401	.095
Error	129		

Note. *indicate significance at the $p < 0.05$ level; **indicate significance at the $p < .01$ level.

tests for GPA (as it was not reported on an interval measurement scale and the distribution was not normal) and t-tests for the MASI (interview anxiety scale) for each comparison testing a hypothesis. The results of the t-tests are reported in Tables 8, 9, 10, and 11. In no case did levels of GPA or interview anxiety differ between structure, ethnicity, gender, or gender-ethnicity conditions. Cohen's d effect sizes were reported for all t-test analyses.

Hypothesis 1: As can be seen in Table 8, one-tailed t-tests found that participants who experienced the structured interview scored significantly lower on overall and numeric DAT than did participants who experienced the unstructured interview, providing support for Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2: To test Hypothesis 2, which predicted larger differences between structured (without explanation) and unstructured conditions on the DAT for females and Hispanics than for white males, we ran t-tests for each ethnicity-sex combination, protecting against inflated alpha with a critical p-value of .0125. As can be seen in Table 9, white males who experienced the unstructured interview did not score significantly higher on the overall or numeric DAT than white males who experienced the structured interview. However, this difference was significant for white females on the overall DAT and was very close to the critical value of .0125 on the numeric section. The difference was not significant for Hispanic females, but there were medium to large effect sizes for both overall and numeric DAT scores. The difference was not significant for Hispanic males.

These results allow us to reject the null hypothesis with regard to female participants but not to Hispanic participants. This provides partial support for Hypothesis 2, in that we found that differences between unstructured and structured with explanation conditions were larger for females than for males. Indeed, t-tests comparing DAT scores for all males who experienced the structured interview with explanation

TABLE 8 HYPOTHESIS 1: T-TESTS COMPARING STRUCTURED WITHOUT EXPLANATION TO UNSTRUCTURED FOR DAT

	DF	T	P	COHEN'S D
Overall DAT	111	2.561	.006	.482
Numeric DAT	111	2.579	.006	.485
Interview Anxiety	90	.319	.375	.066
GPA	93	*	.457	—

*In SPSS version 20 the Mann Whitney u is not reported when running the test, but the p value for the Mann Whitney is reported.

TABLE 9 HYPOTHESIS 2: T-TESTS COMPARING STRUCTURED WITHOUT EXPLANATION VS. UNSTRUCTURED BY GENDER/ETHNICITY COMBINATIONS FOR DAT, NUMERIC DAT, INTERVIEW ANXIETY, AND GPA

	ETHNICITY	GENDER	DF	T	P	COHEN'S D
Overall DAT	White	Male	24	.569	.27	.223
		Female	28	2.892	.004	1.05
	Hispanic	Male	27	1.015	.155	.376
		Female	26	1.550	.067	.586
Numeric DAT	White	Male	24	1.096	.172	.365
		Female	28	2.186	.016	.789
	Hispanic	Male	27	.759	.227	.282
		Female	26	.85	.200	.321
Interview Anxiety	White	Male	24	.880	.201	.536
		Female	28	.111	.456	.042
	Hispanic	Male	27	.036	.485	.014
		Female	26	.872	.195	.339
GPA	White	Male	10	*	.699	—
		Female	27	*	.714	—
	Hispanic	Male	25	*	1.000	—
		Female	25	*	.185	—

*In SPSS version 20 the Mann Whitney u is not reported when running the test, but the p value for the Mann Whitney is reported.

TABLE 10 HYPOTHESIS 3: T-TESTS COMPARING STRUCTURED WITH EXPLANATION VS. UNSTRUCTURED FOR DAT, NUMERIC DAT, INTERVIEW ANXIETY, AND GPA

	DF	T	P	COHEN'S D
Overall DAT	109	1.533	.065	.291
Numeric DAT	109	.592	.278	.113
Interview Anxiety	92	.102	.459	.021
GPA	94	*	.973	—

*In SPSS version 20 the Mann Whitney u is not reported when running the test, but the p value for the Mann Whitney is reported.

of purpose to males who experienced the unstructured interview were not significant for overall scores ($t(53) = 1.158, p = .252$, one-tailed, Cohen's $d = .313$) or numeric scores, ($t(53) = 1.693, p = .056$, one-tailed, Cohen's $d = .457$), while for females these differences were significant for both overall scores ($t(56) = 2.993, p = .002$, one-tailed, Cohen's $d = .783$) and numeric DAT scores ($t(56) = 2.134, p = .015$, one-tailed, Cohen's $d = .566$).

TABLE 11 HYPOTHESIS 3A T-TESTS COMPARING STRUCTURED WITH EXPLANATION VS. UNSTRUCTURED FOR DAT, NUMERIC DAT, INTERVIEW ANXIETY, AND GPA

	ETHNICITY	GENDER	DF	T	P	COHEN'S D
Overall DAT	White	Male	24	.655	.286	.255
		Female	27	1.064	.149	.397
	Hispanic	Male	26	-1.26	.110	.476
		Female	26	-2.31	.015	.872
Numeric DAT	White	Male	24	.538	.134	.443
		Female	27	1.484	.075	.554
	Hispanic	Male	26	-.032	.487	.012
		Female	26	-1.87	.037	.706
Interview Anxiety	White	Male	24	1.38	.096	.752
		Female	27	1.208	.119	.466
	Hispanic	Male	26	-.804	.214	.315
		Female	26	1.153	.130	.452
GPA	White	Male	14	*	.635	—
		Female	26	*	.683	—
	Hispanic	Male	24	*	.880	—
		Female	24	*	.687	—

*In SPSS version 20 the Mann Whitney u is not reported when running the test, but the p value for the Mann Whitney is reported.

Hypothesis 3: As can be seen in Table 10, two one-tailed t-tests comparing participants who experienced the unstructured interview and those who experienced the structured interview with explanation of purpose were not significant for overall or numeric DAT scores. This supports the null hypothesis and provides support for Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 3a: We tested Hypothesis 3a by conducting t-tests comparing those who had experienced the structured interview with an explanation of purpose to those who had experienced an unstructured interview separately for Hispanic males, Hispanic females, white females, and white males. As can be seen in Table 11, Hispanic males who experienced the structured interview with an explanation of purpose did not score differently than Hispanic males who experienced the unstructured interview on the overall or numeric section of the DAT, nor did white males. White females experiencing the structured interview with explanation of purpose did not differ significantly on overall or numeric scores compared to scores of those experiencing the unstructured interview. However, Hispanic females experiencing the structured

interview with explanation did score significantly lower on the overall and numeric DAT than Hispanic females experiencing the unstructured interview.

While the null was accepted for Hispanic males, white males, and white females, Hypothesis 3a was supported only for white females and males. White females actually scored higher on the test when they experienced the structured interview with explanation of purpose than when they experienced the unstructured interview condition (but not significantly so). Hispanic males did not score differently when they experienced a structured interview with explanation of purpose than when they experienced the unstructured interview, but scored *lower* on the DAT when they received an explanation of purpose than when they experienced structure without any explanation. This does not support Hypothesis 3a. Hispanic females did score significantly lower on the DAT when they experienced the interview with an explanation of purpose than when they experienced the unstructured interview, which was also the opposite of our prediction in Hypothesis 3a.

Additional analyses. Given the significant main effect of ethnicity on DAT scores and the unexpected findings that providing an explanation of the purpose of structure resulted in lower DAT scores for Hispanic participants (as compared to both the unstructured *and* the structured without explanation conditions), we conducted analyses to determine whether scores from white and Hispanic test-takers differed significantly from one another in each of the three structure conditions. Because we were conducting three t-tests on each dependent variable, we used a critical value of p of .017 (.05 ÷ 3). As is shown in Table 12, Hispanic participants who experienced the unstructured interview scored about 3.5 points lower than white participants in the same condition on the DAT, and slightly less than 2.0 points lower than white participants on the numeric section of the DAT. These differences were not significant. Hispanic participants who experienced the structured interview without explanation scored about 3.0 points lower overall on the DAT than whites who experienced the same condition, and about equal on the numeric ability portion of the test. Neither of these differences was statistically significant. However, in

TABLE 12 ADDITIONAL ANALYSES; COMPARING HISPANIC WITH CAUCASIANS FOR DAT AND NUMERIC DAT UNDER DIFFERENT STRUCTURE CONDITIONS

	STRUCTURE CONDITION	DF	T	P	COHEN'S D
Overall DAT	Structure Without Exp.	56	1.072	.144	.281
	Unstructured	53	1.234	.112	.334
	Structured With Exp.	54	3.701	.001	.989
Numeric DAT	Structure Without Exp.	56	.030	.488	.008
	Unstructured	53	1.358	.090	.367
	Structure With Exp.	54	2.604	.006	.696

the structured with explanation condition, Hispanic participants scored more than 11 points lower on the DAT than white participants, with about four of those points coming from the numeric-ability section. Both of these differences were statistically significant. These results suggest that providing structure *and* explaining the reason for structure in the job interview actually increased differences between Hispanic and white cognitive performance following the job interview, as compared to experiencing an unstructured interview or a structured interview where the purpose of the structure was not explained.

Discussion

Findings

The main purpose of the current study was to conduct an exploratory investigation of how interview structure and an explanation of its purpose influenced cognitive ability performance, as measured directly after the job interview. The secondary purpose was to conduct a preliminary investigation of whether there were performance differences in these structure conditions between sex and ethnic groups who have been frequently stereotyped in interview-related domains (females and Hispanics) and those who have not (white males). Our exploratory factorial ANOVA analyses were significant for the main effects of structure and ethnicity on both overall and numeric ability DAT scores, and significant for the main effect of sex on numeric ability scores. We also found a significant three-way interaction of structure, ethnicity, and sex on numeric ability scores, which hinted that different sexes and ethnicities may interact differently with structure. ANCOVAs showed that when controlling for self-reported interview anxiety, DAT scores no longer differed between the structure conditions, suggesting that anxiety may be a source of the reduced performance.

A planned t-test found that participants who experienced the structured interview with no explanation of purpose did score significantly lower on both overall cognitive ability and the numeric test than participants who experienced the unstructured interview, providing support for Hypothesis 1. However, participants who experienced the structured interview conditions did not report greater interview anxiety than those who experienced the unstructured interview.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that females and Hispanics who experienced the structured interview would score significantly lower on the cognitive-ability test than females and Hispanics who experienced the unstructured interview, but that this difference would be smaller for white males. Planned t-tests found the difference in scores between white females who experienced the structured interview and those who experienced the unstructured interview was significant in the predicted direction, and effect sizes were also large (but not significant) for Hispanic

females. These differences were not significant for white males, which partially supports Hypothesis 2. We did not find the same results for Hispanic males.

We found support for Hypothesis 3, which predicted that providing an explanation of structure would reduce the effects of structure on performance such that participants who experienced the structured interview with an explanation of the purpose of structuring the interview would *not* score significantly lower on the subsequent cognitive ability performance assessment than participants who experienced the unstructured interview. Hypothesis 3a predicted that, when looking at sex and ethnicity separately, females and Hispanics who experienced the structured interview with an explanation of purpose would *not* score significantly lower on a cognitive ability assessment than females and Hispanics who experienced the unstructured interview. This hypothesis was partially supported, with analyses indicating no significant differences between white females who experienced the structured interview with explanation of purpose and white females who experienced the unstructured interview, nor between Hispanic or white males who experienced either interview condition. However, Hispanic females who experienced a structured interview with an explanation scored significantly lower on the DAT than those who experienced the unstructured interview, which did not support Hypothesis 3a. Hispanic males who experienced a structured interview with an explanation actually scored lower on the DAT than those who experienced the structured interview without an explanation, which also did not support Hypothesis 3a.

Because we noticed dissimilar patterns between white-Hispanic differences in mean test scores across the structure conditions, we ran additional t-tests comparing scores on the DAT between white and Hispanic participants. We found that Hispanic participants did not score significantly different than white participants in the unstructured interview or in the structured interview without explanation of purpose, but did score significantly lower than whites in the structured interview when an explanation of purpose was provided.

Though ANCOVAs investigating the effects of structure, ethnicity, and sex controlling for interview anxiety rendered the effect of structure on DAT scores insignificant, t-tests comparing structure conditions in all hypotheses for the variable of self-reported interview anxiety levels were not significant.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Job interview research has found that structure—despite its advantages—can decrease feelings of fairness and perceived control over the interview process (Barrick et al., 2010), and other research has found that lack of control is associated with poorer performance via anxiety suppressing memory (Lachman & Agrigoroaei, 2012). Our findings suggest that experiencing the structured interview can

influence cognitive-ability performance directly after the job interview. Kalokerinos, von Hippel, and Zacher (2014) and Bragger, Kutcher, and Torres (2014) propose that programs and interventions implemented to reduce or eliminate the effects of discrimination and bias may, in some cases, have unintentional side effects; Kirby, Kaiser & Major (2015) found some evidence that this might be true. In the current study, we found that white males and Hispanic males and females scored about 5 points lower on the DAT after experiencing the structured interview when there was no explanation of the structure elements versus the unstructured interview. White females scored about 7.5 points lower in the structure (without explanation) condition than in the unstructured interview condition.

In our study, cognitive-ability performance was suppressed when individuals experienced a structured interview immediately before taking another assessment, but it is unclear from our research how long these effects would last. With various levels of interviews occurring through the selection process along with the potential for a variety of employment assessments being implemented for entry into and advancement through an organization, the results from this study should be considered when selection systems are designed. Perhaps organizations should pilot-test structured interviews to garner information about reactions and performance resulting from the particulars of the structuring process. Potential interviewees and current employees can give input on how various interview practices affect reactions and performance during and after the interview. In fact, while much of the research about structure in the interview tends to dichotomize structure, it is more beneficial, and practically helpful, to investigate specifically how certain practices (e.g., rapport building, question formatting, the sequence of multiple test types) lead to specific outcomes.

It is unclear from our research whether increased evaluation apprehension from the “cues” given in the structured interview mediated differences in test scores. While the significant effects of structure in the factorial ANOVA became non-significant when controlling for self-reported interview anxiety in ANCOVAs, t-tests comparing hypothesized structured differences were not significant for the interview anxiety variable. This does not support the hypothesized mechanism through which performance is reduced in the structured interview. One explanation for this could be that some participants did not complete the interview anxiety scale, which reduced the power of these analyses. We should note that these findings are consistent with those of many studies investigating reduced performance in education or selection contexts; these studies have found that self-reported anxiety measures are not predictive of reduced performance, because individuals who feel threatened are often either unwilling to admit it or are unaware that they are anxious (Bosson, Haymovitz, & Pinel, 2004; Schmader, 2002).

Roberson, Deitch, Brief, and Block (2003) found that African Americans who were the only employees of their race in a department

reported higher levels of stereotype threat, which was related to feedback discounting, dismissal of feedback, doubting of feedback accuracy, and questioning the motives of the feedback source—all of which could inhibit the future performance of these employees. For white females, our findings echo those in the stereotype-threat literature that suggest that one way to eliminate these effects is to have teachers or test administrators provide information about the assessment’s fairness and lack of bias (Inzlicht & Kang, 2010). However, this method was not effective in reducing differences for Hispanic participants. It could be that the primed Hispanic participants who received an explanation of structure discounted the explanation of the structure and the motives behind it, as did the stereotype-threatened African American employees in the Roberson et al. study. Those who manage selection and performance in organizational settings often assume that providing more feedback and explanation of personnel processes results in more acceptance from users of the system by increasing understanding and reducing ambiguity (Kromrei, 2015). However, if the information is discounted or rejected based on past experiences with stereotype or discrimination, this information may not be accepted or internalized (Roberson & Kulik, 2007). Wout and colleagues (2008) suggest that victims of stereotype threat enter interpersonal situations assessing the possibility and probability of being stereotyped.

Based on this finding, we predicted that there may be more cues in the structured interview that make salient cognitive ability and other stereotype-threatened domains. Furthermore, we reasoned that making the purpose of this structure explicit to the interviewee (especially when presented by the person who would be doing the evaluating) might interrupt the interviewee’s assumption that stereotyping would take place. However, perhaps mentioning that the interview was specifically formulated

to reduce bias actually triggers that bias is possible. That is, some minority applicants may then get the message that the interviewer views the applicant according to stereotypes and not on an equal level with white male applicants. While exploratory in nature, our findings suggest it is important for human resources (HR) and organizational development (OD) specialists to be trained in the social psychology of interpersonal interactions and stereotypes so they understand how an individual’s history and experiences can influence the communication style and explanation techniques needed to maximize individual performance and system-wide prediction.

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study was the first investigation of how structuring a job interview, in conjunction with priming race and sex, can influence

While exploratory in nature, our findings suggest it is important for human resources (HR) and organizational development (OD) specialists to be trained in the social psychology of interpersonal interactions and stereotypes so they understand how an individual’s history and experiences can influence the communication style and explanation techniques needed to maximize individual performance and system-wide prediction.

cognitive-ability test performance directly after the interview. As discussed previously, this research has important theoretical and practical implications, but several limitations of the research must be noted. This study had a relatively low sample size per condition and therefore had lower power than we would have liked. A power analysis suggested that for a medium effect size (.3), which is predicted for subtle and moderately threat-activating cues according to the applied stereotype-threat literature (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008), 32 participants per cell would have power of .80 to reject the null hypothesis. We had this degree of power to test the first and third hypotheses, and were almost at this level for the additional analyses we conducted, but did not have adequate power to test Hypotheses 2 and 3a. Even with considerable time and effort in recruiting participants and collecting data, we had significant difficulties in the recruitment of Hispanic participants for a study on cognitive performance testing. In fact, there were some comments made by Hispanic male participants to research assistants about their feelings of being judged according to their ethnicity—in essence, stereotype threat in action! While the researchers made various attempts to recruit through targeting courses and co-curricular groups that would have a higher percentage of ethnic minority representation, we did not wish to unevenly prime Hispanic participants in comparison to other participants by recruiting only for this group. Future studies should determine novel recruitment methods to include more participants per condition to clarify these findings.

Our study was the first investigation of how structuring a job interview, in conjunction with priming race and sex, can influence cognitive-ability test performance directly after the interview.

Second, the present sample included undergraduate students. While this is a limitation, it would be very difficult to conduct an experimental study of this sort as a true selection system for ethical reasons. However, almost 80% of the “applicants” were currently employed, and all had job experience. While the simulated interview would not be as urgent to participants as an actual selection situation, we did tell participants that we would be using job-interview responses and cognitive-ability scores to predict their likelihood of being successful in their chosen career, which added a “high-stake” element to the process.

Another limitation of the study is that we did not have baseline measures of DAT performance or another measure of cognitive ability to make sure that the different conditions did not originally differ in cognitive performance. Although most experimental and quasi-experimental stereotype-threat studies do not have baseline measures of the dependent variables, so as not to confound the manipulation of stereotype, some studies have asked participants to report SAT scores as an alternative baseline measure. We did ask participants to report their SAT scores and cumulative GPA, and participants did not differ between groups on GPA for any of the hypothesis tests. However, too many participants left

SAT scores blank for us to analyze the data. Future studies might access GPA or SAT scores, or both, from the institution rather than through self-report.

In addition, this study did not examine the particular aspects of the structured interview that may have negatively affected the test scores. For example, in the structured condition, the interviewer asked the same questions of all candidates (question consistency), engaged in note-taking and had an answer rubric (evaluation standardization), asked both behavioral and situational questions (question sophistication), and limited questions and personal discussion not related to job performance (rapport building). Some of these structuring techniques may be more visible or potentially more threatening to the interviewee. Future studies should manipulate these factors to tease out which of these aspects of structure most influence performance on subsequent selection tests.

All participants in all conditions of this study were primed for ethnicity and sex. Priming the race, ethnicity, or sex of an individual in conjunction with asking about or evaluating the individual in stereotyped domains has been consistently found to induce stereotype-threat effects (Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). Future research should examine the influence of interview structure in conjunction with the manipulation of “priming” ethnicity and sex to more explicitly explore the role of stereotype threat on applicant outcomes in structured and unstructured interviews. Finally, future research should investigate possible techniques, such as having interviewers of the same sex and race, which can be implemented by organizations to alleviate the suppression of performance. In our study, we have taken a first step in investigating the role of interview structure on performance on other aspects of the selection process. Future research should continue to investigate these relationships in the selection process as well as in the wider realm of organizational effectiveness.

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