

MEN DON'T CARE WHILE WOMEN FIND IT UNFAIR: EXPLORING THE
HARMFUL CONSEQUENCES OF ILLEGAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ON
WOMEN'S REACTIONS

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DEDICATION

For my mom. Thanks for being my number one cheerleader and never losing hope in my abilities or dreams, even when I did.

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Although interviews are a widely used and popular selection technique, when they lack clear structure and a predetermined set of questions, bias can permeate the interview selection process. In particular, illegal interview questions (i.e., questions that cannot legally be asked, such as marital status or children) may be particularly threatening for female applicants. Justice and social identity theory were used to explain the applicant reactions to illegal interview questions in this study. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four hypothetical interview conditions – a control of four low face-valid interview questions, four non-gender relevant illegal interview questions, or four gender-relevant illegal interview questions. There was a significant gender by condition interaction on all outcome measures. Illegal interview questions had a significant negative effect on women's organizational reactions (job pursuit intentions, organizational attractiveness, belonging, trust & comfort) but not on men's organizational reactions. In contrast both women and men had significantly lower procedural justice perceptions of the gender-relevant illegal interview condition compared to the two other conditions. However, women perceived the illegal interview questions (both the gender relevant and gender non-relevant questions) as lower in face validity (i.e., were less relevant to the job), whereas men perceived all the interview questions as equally face-valid. Thus, although men believed the illegal interview questions were low in procedural justice and unfair, men still perceived these questions as valid and job-relevant. Overall,

an indirect effect of procedural justice perceptions on organizational reactions was significant for both men and women, indicating that lower procedural justice did have a significant negative effect on applicants' organizational reactions. Taken together, the following study demonstrates that illegal interview questions (both those related to gender and unrelated to gender) act as a social identity threat for women and harm women's attraction to the organization, whereas men are primarily unaffected by these illegal interview questions in their reactions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables ix
List of Figures x
Introduction..... 1
Literature Review..... 5
 Interviews 5
 Illegal Interview Questions 6
 The Harmful Influence..... 7
 Illegal Interview Questions Impact..... 9
 Justice Perceptions 10
 Gender as a Moderator..... 12
 Adding to Past Research on Illegal Interviews 15
 The Current Research 17
Methods..... 20
 Study Overview 20
 Procedures..... 20
 Participants..... 23
 Measures 25
Results & Analyses..... 28
 Organizational Reactions 32
 Procedural Justice 34
 Face Validity 36
 Full Model..... 38
Discussion..... 40
 Theoretical Implications 42
 Practical Implications..... 44
 Limitations & Future Directions..... 45
Appendices..... 50
 Appendix A..... 50
 Appendix B..... 51
 Appendix C..... 53
References..... 56
Curriculum Vitae

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Correlations across outcome variables	27
Table 2: ANOVA results with Interview Condition	28
Table 3: Means and SD by Study Condition Across Gender.....	29
Table 4: Factor Analysis of Reaction Items.....	30

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Pictorial representation of Hypothesis 1.....	10
Figure 2. Pictorial representation of Hypothesis 2 and 3.....	12
Figure 3. Pictorial representation of Hypothesis 4 and 5.....	15
Figure 4. Graphical representation of organizational company reactions results.....	31
Figure 5. Graphical representation of procedural justice perceptions results.....	34
Figure 6. Graphical representation of face validity perceptions results.....	36
Figure 7. Pictorial representation of directional relationships for women.....	37
Figure 8. Pictorial representation of directional relationships for men	37

Introduction

Although there has been research on how to conduct a 'better' interview, less research has explored the ramifications on when an interview is not properly implemented (Campion, Palmer, Campion, 1997; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994; Wiesner and Cronshaw, 1988). Selection procedures are perceived more favorably by applicants when the content is clearly related to job duties (Hausknecht et al. 2004). Interviews are the most common selection procedure applied, with unstructured interviews the most frequently challenged selection tool, accounting for 57% of federal court cases related to selection (Williams, Schaffer, & Ellis, 2013). Illegal interview questions, questions that cannot legally be asked due to state or federal laws, are by and large one way interviews can be mishandled and also lead to justifiable litigation claims. Examples of questions that have been outlawed include those pertaining to an applicant's age, marital status, children, religious orientation, sexual orientation, and other questions that are largely irrelevant to the job (Civil Rights Act of 1964, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990).

Although illegal questions should never be asked during the interview process, organizations have reported asking questions about arrest record and convictions, age, and handicaps (which were also illegal at the time) (Keyton & Springston, 1992). In fact, when McShulskis (1997) surveyed 100 small businesses, they found that 100% of respondents indicated that they would or had asked an illegal interview question. Another study by Parent, Weiser, and McCourt (2015) explored the prevalence of illegal questions among doctoral and internship interviewees. Overall, 60.4% of graduate interviewees

were asked at least one potentially inappropriate question and 42.5% of internship applicants indicated being asked at least one potentially inappropriate question. Parent and colleagues (2015) found that those interviewing for doctoral programs were asked illegal and inappropriate questions at a greater rate than those interviewing for masters programs. Moreover, non-heterosexual and non-White participants were asked their sexual orientation or ethnic background more often than others in these interviews as well (Parent et al., 2015). Jablin (1982) and Jablin and Tengler (1982) found that, when asked discriminatory questions during campus interviews, they were related to sex most often (34%), followed by age (18%), national origin (16%), handicaps (12%), religion (11%), and race (9%).

Jones and Arena (2017) further explore the prevalence of illegal interview questions among individuals interviewing for academic positions. Specifically, these participants filled out a survey each time they completed an interview, collecting a total dataset of 277 campus interviews from 134 individuals. They inquired about the pressure to disclose private information during these long interview visits using a 4-item scale. Fifteen percent of respondents indicated they were asked illegal or inappropriate questions about their personal life, 22% felt pressured into sharing personal information, 32% indicated people making comments that led them to feel as if they needed to disclose additional personal information, and 7% felt their potential offer would be in jeopardy if they were not open about their personal life. When candidates reported more pressure to disclose personal information, they were less attracted to the job, less likely to accept an offer if received, and less likely to recommend the institution to others. Thus,

surveys of both applicants and organizations suggest that there is a high prevalence of illegal questions during selection.

In the current study, I examined the impact of illegal interview questions on applicant reactions and explored the processes underscoring this relationship. Specifically, testing whether illegal questions elicit negative reactions towards a company. This included participant's having lower belonging and trust in the organization, reduced organizational attractiveness, and lower intentions to pursue a job at the company. Moreover, this examination included whether illegal interview questions are perceived as unjust by the applicants and whether these unjust perceptions led to negative reactions towards the company. Because illegal interview questions may suggest that women's gender identity will be devalued at the company (Murphy and Taylor, 2012), I explored whether women have lower justice perceptions than men stemming from gender-relevant illegal interview questions. These questions may act as a signal to women that their identity is not valued and lead to lower trust and belonging in the company, as well as lower intentions to pursue the job, causing some women to potentially pull out of the application process. Because the application process is two-sided, this means that applicants are actively engaging in the selection process as well. This study is influential in understanding how the applicant pool may be reduced due to the introduction of illegal interview questions by evoking negative reactions from the applicants (e.g., discomfort and less interest in the job position) (Rynes, 1993; Hausknecht et al. 2014).

Although past work has examined the relationship between illegal interview questions and reactions to an institution (see Jones and Arena, 2017; Saks and McCarthy,

2006), previous research has not examined an explanatory mechanism. Examining justice perceptions as a potential mechanism allowed us to explore what is motivating these negative reactions from applicants. Moreover, this work also aimed to demonstrate that justice perceptions can form before a person begins working in an organization. At the current time, justice perceptions towards a company are explored among employees already working in the organization. This research has the potential to show that justice perceptions develop during the interview process and can impact the company's selection and recruiting potential. A deliberate contribution, this study also specifies the type of illegal interview question, whether it is gender-relevant or not, to see whether there were any differences in reactions between men and women in general or with gender-specific illegal interview questions.

Literature Review

Interviews

Interviews have become a widely used aspect of the application process and are employed more frequently than any other selection technique (Nyfield & Baron, 2000; Sharf & Jones, 2000). Moreover, interviews are a popular selection tool among applicants and organizations because they allow both sides to determine whether the applicant would be a good fit in the organization (Macan, 2009). When properly designed (i.e., when the content of the interview relates to the job), interviews can act as a reliable predictor of job performance (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1998; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; McDaniel et al. 1994). However, organizations often utilize unstructured interviews that are not specifically created to evaluate requirements, lack a uniform set of questions, and are open to personal discretion by the interviewer (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). These unstructured interviews ultimately can reduce the accuracy and validity of a job interview.

During a structured interview, the interviewer follows a common procedure for each interview (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). That is, a structured interview entails asking all applicants the same questions and each response is evaluated according to carefully defined and standardized rating scales that were determined beforehand (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). In contrast, an unstructured interview does not have a consistent set of questions, and as a result, can be influenced by personal discretion of the interviewer by what they do or do not ask the applicant. Interviews without a standardized approach begin to mimic disorganized conversations and generate impressions based upon impulsive reactions (Wagner, 1949). These unstructured

interviews are not a useful selection technique and multiple meta-analyses exploring the effectiveness of interviews have demonstrated that structured interviews possess greater criterion-related validity than unstructured interviews. For example, structured interviews correlate highly with the mental ability tests, job knowledge tests, and work samples/simulations and other top predictors (Wiesner and Cronshaw, 1988; McDaniel et al., 1994; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; Hunter & Hunter, 1984; Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). Structuring interviews with predetermined questions produces an assessment that is less open to interviewer bias or the introduction of interviewers' personal questions or curiosities, which may be illegal to ask (e.g., "Are you married"; "Do you have children") (Campion et al. 1997).

Illegal Interview Questions

According to federal and state laws, certain topics cannot be addressed during an interview. For example, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids discrimination based on children, race, color, religion, national origin, or sex, and makes it illegal to ask questions on any of these topics. The 1990's American with Disabilities Act further dictates it is illegal to ask about mental or psychological disorders, as well as any other disability, including physical. Moreover, individual state laws and statues have made it illegal to ask about other personal areas. For instance, the Indiana Civil Rights Law builds upon federal laws by also prohibiting employment practices that discriminate on the basis of ancestry or status as a veteran (*IN Stat. Sec. 22-9-1-2*). This state law applies to all public employers and private employers with six or more employees.

Although these legal protections cannot fully remove bias, they do defend some stigmatized classes. Nevertheless, not all topics that are unrelated to a specific job are

prohibited by law. Indeed, some interviewers find ways around the law by asking questions that are considered 'inappropriate' rather than 'illegal'. These inappropriate questions often include inquiring about topics that are not related to the job and may indirectly provide interviewers with information about illegal topic areas (e.g., marital or parental status). For instance, such questions can include "We have an in-building daycare, if that would interest you" or "This is not a very good city to meet single people, would that be a concern of yours?". Although it is important to clarify the difference between illegal and inappropriate interview questions, the current study only looked at illegal interview questions. This was to reduce any concern about the justifiability or legal defensibility, as illegal interview questions are always illegal, but companies may attempt to defend inappropriate questions. Defensibility does not determine justification for use, it only determines which questions were included in this study so as to draw a clear line of whether it is illegal or not.

The Harmful Influence

Because stereotypes (or general beliefs about groups of people) can be automatic and unintentional (Devine, 1989), when interviews lack structure, there is a greater possibility of stereotypes and biases influencing outcomes (Koch 2015). For instance, researchers found that when participants committed to a clear set of criteria for a job applicant before learning an applicant's gender, they indicated equivalent evaluations across male and female applicants (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). In contrast, when participants knew an applicant's gender and then stated the criterion for the job, participants skewed the importance of different qualities depending on whether a male or female applicant possessed them (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). For example, if a female

applicant for a traditionally male occupation (i.e., police officer, firefighter) had a lot of experience, participants weighted the importance of experience less heavily after learning the applicant was a woman (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005).

As another example, Madera and Hebl (2013) explored the impact of unstructured and structured interview settings when participant interviewers tried to suppress bias. The researchers found that participant interviewers who were trying to suppress bias and were in an unstructured interview situation inadvertently showed more evidence of bias (Mader & Hebl, 2013). In particular, participants' focus on bias suppression brought thoughts related to bias and race to the forefront of their attention, causing them to show more stigmatizing behavior (e.g., sitting further away from the interviewee) relative to participants who did not try to suppress their bias (Madera & Hebl, 2013). However, participating in a structured interview helped mitigate some of the harmful effects associated with bias suppression (Madera & Hebl, 2013). Thus, because structured interviews have greater consistency, validity, contain pre-selected job-relevant questions, and are all asked for all applicants, structured interviews are less susceptible to bias and reduce the inclusion of illegal interview questions (Campion, Palmer, Campion, 1997).

Past work has found that applicants can be evaluated differently during interviews based on their gender, race, age, and disability status (Arvey, 1979), and hence, asking illegal interview question such as "Do you have any children?", "Do you have any handicaps?", or "Are you married?" could harm applicants' chances of receiving a job offer. Moreover, it also may be difficult for applicants to avoid answering these questions. Interviewers are in a more powerful position in this dyad than applicants because applicants can only make a decision about working for the organization after

they have received a job offer (Anderson, 1992). These power differences between interviewers and applicants may pressure applicants to answer any inquiry regardless of whether the question is invasive, inappropriate, or illegal (Parent, Weiser, & McCourt, 2015). When the interviewer is made aware of information about the applicant because of illegal interview questions, this information may then bias the interviewer's perception of the applicant, particularly when they try to suppress and ignore it (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2007; Madera & Hebl, 2013).

Illegal Interview Questions Impact

Illegal and inappropriate interview questions also may harm an organization's productivity and profit. For instance, because illegal interview questions are poor predictors of job performance, using these questions may result in organizations hiring less qualified employees (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011; Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1998; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994; McDaniel, Whetzel, Schmidt, & Maurer, 1994). Moreover, companies may reduce their applicant pool with the introduction of illegal interview questions, and hence, may not attract the best applicants for their position (Murphy, 1986; Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman, & Stoffey, 1993). When interviewers ask illegal or inappropriate questions, applicants may perceive these questions as having very poor face validity (i.e., how related the content of the interview questions are to the job; Smither et al., 1993). The lack of face validity can result in applicants perceiving the questions, and by relationship the interview, as unfair (Reilly & Warech, 1994). The belief that the interview was unfair and poor feelings about the process may then result in a potentially qualified applicant being less likely to accept a job offer and feeling less attracted to the organization (Hausknecht et al. 2014; Macan, Avedon, Paese, & Smith,

1994). Moreover, applicants who find particular aspects of the selection process invasive may dissuade other potential applicants from applying to that company (Smither, Reilly, Millsap, Pearlman, & Stoffey, 1993). Indeed, past correlational research has found that when job applicants feel pressured to disclose personal information during an interview they indicate lower attraction to the job, lower likelihood to accept a job offer, and lower likelihood to encourage others to apply one month after the interview occurred (Jones & Arena, 2017). Illegal and inappropriate interview questions, therefore, may cause organizations to lose out on top candidates (Murphy, 1986).

H1: Illegal interview questions will lead to negative reactions towards the company from the applicants (e.g. anticipated belonging & trust and comfort in the organization, organizational attractiveness, and job pursuit intentions). (See Figure 1)

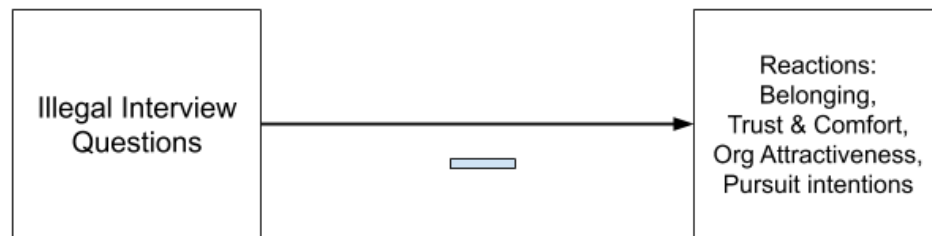


Figure 1. Pictorial representation of Hypothesis 1.

Justice Perceptions

Gilliland (1993) proposed that applicants' perceptions of fairness directly influences their attitudes and behaviors during and after hiring. Proposing that applicants view selection in terms of justice, these perceptions influence their attitudes, intentions, and behaviors (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004). Thus, applicants may have negative reactions to organizations that ask inappropriate or illegal questions because of poor

justice perceptions (i.e., believing the illegal interview questions are unfair because they do not apply to the content of the job). Applicants can have three specific justice perceptions with regard to the interview. Interactional justice is concerned with the interpersonal treatment received, procedural justice is associated with the procedures used during the interview (e.g., procedures applied consistently across people and time, free from bias, etc.), and distributional justice is concerned with the fairness of the outcomes (e.g., whether one receives a job offer) (Colquitt et al. 2001; Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980). Because procedural justice concerns the fairness of the procedures used during the interview to determine outcome distributions (i.e., job offers) (Colquitt et al. 2001), illegal questions should always harm procedural justice beliefs. Within this study, there was a focus on procedural justice, with interactive and distributive justice being controlled for with the questions being presented without an in-person interviewer and without any outcomes or job offers being distributed to participants. Of note, justice perceptions can have important consequences for applicants' perceptions of an organization (Hausknecht et al., 2004). For instance, Bies and Moag (1986) argued that procedural justice perceptions can influence overall organization impressions (Colquitt et al. 2001). Thus, it was anticipated that illegal interview questions would result in low procedural justice perceptions, which in turn would relate to more negative impressions of an organization. Procedural justice perceptions would therefore act as a significant mediator of illegal interview questions' effect on organizational perceptions.

H2: Illegal interview questions lead to poor procedural justice perceptions.

H3: Poor procedural justice perceptions lead to negative reactions in applicants, and as a result, justice perceptions will act as a significant mediator for condition's effect on reactions. (See Figure 2)

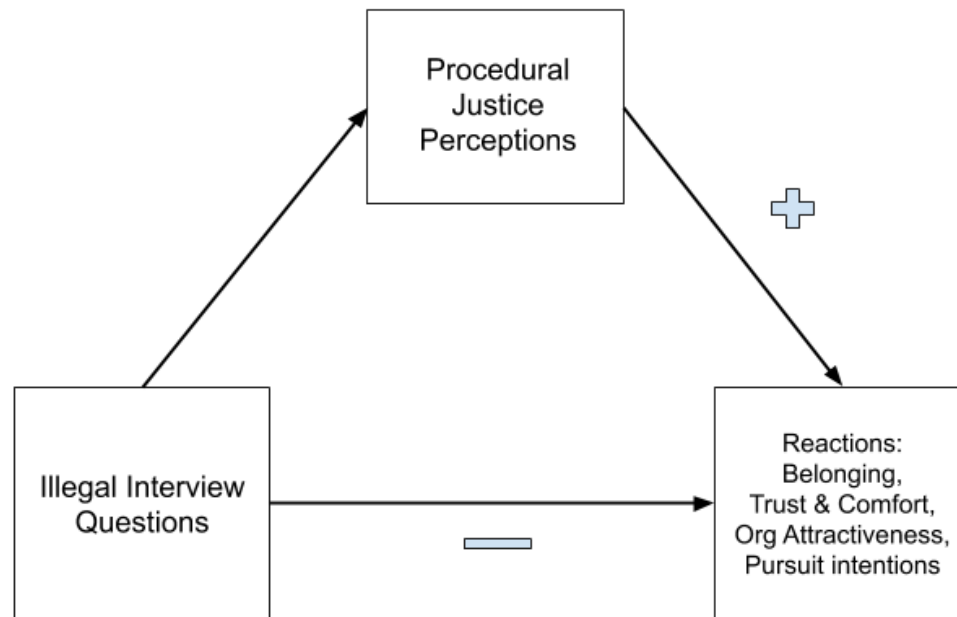


Figure 2. Pictorial representation of Hypothesis 2 and 3

Gender as a Moderator

Women and men may vary in their negative justice perceptions and reactions to organizations after experiencing illegal interview questions. Traditional stereotypes or general beliefs about men and women typically describe men as the 'bread winners' and women as the 'caretakers' (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Consequently, when interviewing for a position, particularly one where women are negatively stereotyped (e.g., a leadership position; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012), women may be susceptible to social identity threat. Social identity threat is the concern that one's identity will be devalued in a given setting (Steele, Spencer, &

Aronson, 2002). Moreover, situational cues can affect whether or not a person is influenced by social identity threat (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). When women are in threatening situations, they have heightened vigilance for these cues that suggest their gender will be perceived negatively. These situational cues can be present in an office, a job website/brochure, or be signaled by an interviewer (Murphy & Taylor, 2012). For example, these cues may involve not seeing women in a job brochure, noticing fewer female bathroom options when walking through the office, or being interviewed by only men (Murphy & Steele, 2010; Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Ditlmann, & Crosby, 2008; Steele, 2010). Likewise, a cue may present itself as asking a woman about marriage or if she has any children, increasing that awareness of her ‘caretaker’ or ‘homemaker’ role. Thus, in the current proposal, I conceptualized illegal interview questions as a potentially threatening cue for women.

By heightening women’s social identity threat, these cues can ultimately result in multiple harmful downstream consequences, including lower trust and comfort in an organization (i.e. beliefs that women cannot trust their colleagues and will not feel comfortable in a situation; Purdie-Vaughns et al., 2008), thinking they will not belong at that company, and feeling less attracted to an organization (Murphy and Taylor, 2012; Murphy and Steele, 2010). As one example, when women were presented a promotional video for a STEM conference that showed more men than women, they perceived this as a cue that they would not belong and had less interest in attending or participating in the conference (Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007). Although the gender imbalance was not directly pointed out, they were aware of the situational cue that they do not belong in that

setting and were less inclined to want to participate in the setting, seeing it as less attractive (Murphy et al. 2007).

Particularly pertinent to the current research, recent work has found that these threatening cues for women can be incorporated in the selection process through the wording presented in job advertisements (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011). Cues in recruitment materials that relate to negatively stereotyped traits for women (e.g. ‘The person cannot be *emotional* in this position’) resulted in qualified women job seekers applying to a lesser extent than qualified men job seekers (Gaucher, Friesen, & Kay, 2011). Women job seekers disproportionately self-selected out of the applicant pool due to the job advertisement wording, something plainly under the organization’s control. Thus, the organization is systematically (even if unintentionally) dissuading women from applying based on this wording.

During the interview stage of the selection process, illegal questions may act as a cue that evokes social identity threat, particularly for women. For instance, asking women about their family (i.e., an illegal question), may remind women that having children could be seen as a conflicting time obligation. Indeed, past work has found that individuals believe mothers are less committed and competent at their jobs when compared to women who are not mothers and when compared to fathers (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008). Thus, it was anticipated that illegal interview questions would act as a social identity threat cue for women, resulting in them having more negative justice perceptions towards the organization than men.

H4: Illegal interview questions will lead to more negative reactions, with women having more negative reactions than men. (See Figure 3)

H5: Illegal interview questions will lead to lower procedural justice perceptions, with women having lower procedural justice perceptions than men. (See Figure 3)

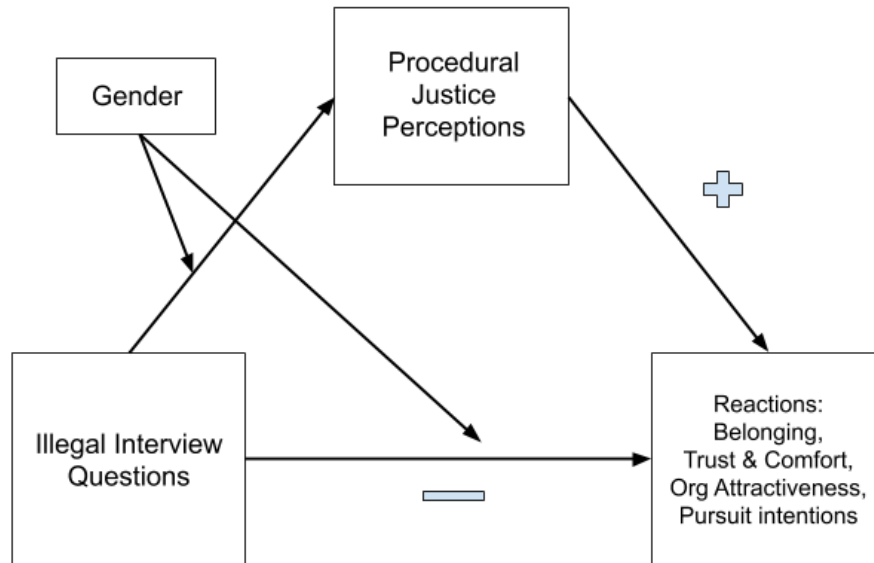


Figure 3. Pictorial representation of Hypothesis 4 and 5

Adding to Past Research on Illegal Interviews

This study built off previous work by Saks and McCarthy (2006), which initially provided evidence for the harmful impact of illegal interview questions on applicant reactions. Saks and McCarthy conducted an interview simulation study with MBA students who acted as though they were applying for a managerial position at ‘Dandy Toys’ in their area of interest, responding to ten interview questions as though they were in an actual interview. Saks and McCarthy (2006) randomly assigned both male and female MBA student participants to an interview with a male or female interviewer and

manipulated the number of illegal interview questions asked during the mock interview. The conditions included no discriminatory questions, two discriminatory questions, or four discriminatory questions. Of note, the researchers determined their number of discriminatory questions based on previous studies looking at the rates of illegal questions occurring in organizations (Jablin, 1982; Keyton & Springston, 1992; Saunders et al., 1990).

Applicants arrived and read a brochure about 'Dandy Toys' and the many job opportunities they had for recent MBA graduates. A receptionist asked them to take a seat upon arrival and a few minutes later the human resource manager approached them. Participants were told to act as if they were actually being interviewed for a job when answering the questions. After the interview, participants completed the dependent measures examining their reactions to the interview and interviewer, perception of Dandy Toys, and job pursuit intentions. The researchers measured reactions to the interview by asking participants how much they liked how the interview was conducted, and whether the interviewer was professional and competent. To examine perceptions of the organization, the researchers assessed participants' perceptions that Dandy Toys treats their employees fairly, their job offer expectation, and their organizational attractiveness to Dandy Toys. To assess job pursuit intentions, the researchers looked at participants' intentions to pursue employment at Dandy Toys, their intentions to accept a job from Dandy Toys, and their likelihood of recommending the organization to a friend.

Compared to those who were not asked illegal interview questions, participants who were asked four illegal interview questions indicated more negative reactions to the interview and interviewer, higher perceptions the organization mistreats employees,

lower intentions to pursue the job, and lower intentions to recommend the organization to others. However, there appeared to be an illegal interview question “threshold” effect. That is, applicants were willing to tolerate a couple of discriminatory questions; the two illegal interview questions condition did not significantly differ from the no illegal interview questions condition on primary outcome measures. Although discriminatory questions had an adverse effect on applicants regardless of their gender or interviewer gender, there were some main effects of both interviewer and interviewee gender. Compared to the male interviewers, the female interviewers resulted in lower ratings of organizational attractiveness, intentions to pursue employment, and accept a job offer. Relative to male interviewees, female interviewees rated the organization lower in its treatment of employees. These gender related findings were consistent with previous field studies which found that women interviewers tend to elicit more negative ratings and women interviewees tend to have more negative organizational reactions (Liden & Parsons, 1986a; Olian, Schwab, & Haberfeld, 1988; Rynes, 1991; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987). Thus, the researchers found that women had more negative perceptions of the organization generally than men, but did not find that illegal interview questions were more harmful for women than for men (Saks & McCarthy, 2006). However, because Saks and McCarthy (2006) recruited a specific population of participants (i.e. MBA students), they had a smaller sample size of 116 and may not have had sufficient power to find an interaction with gender.

The Current Research

Adding to the foundation of this previous work, the current research extended these past findings in multiple ways. First, Saks and McCarthy (2006) examined how

illegal interview questions impacted general perceptions of fairness, whereas the current study tested whether illegal interview questions specifically influenced justice perceptions towards the organization. Second, this study explored whether illegal interview questions differentially harm men and women. Specifically, I recruited a large sample size of participants with the goal being able to detect a significant interaction with gender. Thirdly, a new control condition was included that used interview questions with low face-validity (i.e., questions that do not appear job-relevant and can thus cause discomfort in participants). Items were included pertaining to conscientiousness and extraversion which have low face-validity and appear job-irrelevant but can ultimately predict job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hertz & Donovan, 2000). Thus, the unique effect of illegal interview questions beyond questions that initially seem unrelated to the position could be explored. Finally, two illegal interview question conditions were included. The first illegal condition incorporated illegal questions that are not relevant to gender stereotypes (ex: “What is your date of birth?”) and the second illegal condition included illegal questions that are pertinent to harmful stereotypes about women (ex: “Do you currently use any form of birth control?”). Thus, whether illegal questions in general act as an identity-threat cue for women or whether the illegal questions must be gender specific to function as a threatening cue could be explored.

Overall, I hypothesized that illegal interview questions would lead to negative reactions in applicants. It is anticipated that this relationship can be partly explained through illegal interview questions leading to poor justice perceptions, which in turn would lead to negative reactions from the applicants. Gender as a moderator between illegal interview questions and justice perceptions was also examined, with an initial

hypothesis that women would have lower justice perceptions and more negative reactions from illegal interview questions than men. To explore this possibility, a higher-powered online study was run in which participants viewed a company website, job description, and completed an online interview procedure. Embedded in this online interview were no illegal interview questions presented or four illegal interview questions presented. After the interview, participants' justice perceptions about and reactions towards the organization were explored.

Methods

Study Overview

I ran a 3 (interview condition) by 2 (gender) randomized between-participants design using Amazon's Mechanical Turk to collect the pool of applicants.

Procedures

This study was advertised as being interested in participants' impressions of an organization after going through the interview process. It was repeatedly included in the advertisement that this would have open-ended interview questions that would take approximately 20 minutes so that they were not surprised or agitated by the survey format. Participants were selected through Amazon's Mechanical Turk and told once again at the beginning of the study that they would be asked to respond to 10 interview questions and to only take the study if they had the appropriate time to complete the online interview. They were also asked to treat this as a real online interview. Participants who chose to continue began the study by viewing a company website of "Uptown Consulting", a fictional company, along with a short description of a general consulting job opening (see Appendix A). Next, participants were informed that they were taking part in the new online interview process at Uptown Consulting to determine how well it would work for the company. They were reminded to please act as if this were a real interview that they were taking part in to test out our new online interview format, asking them to please respond to all questions as they would an in-person interview. To appear more realistic and believable, we emphasized that this was to better understand how the online interview format compared to the in-person and to find any flaws between the two

styles. The online interview questions and the format were emphasized multiple times to increase the believability of this being to test interview formats.

At this point, participants were randomly assigned into one of three conditions based on Saks and McCarthy's (2006) interview study. During the 'job interview' for the position, participants read ten interview questions and were provided with a text box to type a response to each question. Modified from Saks and McCarthy's (2006) questions, all conditions contained ten questions, with six of the ten being standard interview questions presented in the same number order each time, and four of the ten interview questions being modified to match the interview condition (see Appendix B). An example of a question that all interviews asked was "Do you have any previous consulting experience?", a question with high face-validity that is clearly related to the job of a consultant. This was presented as the second interview question for all of the interviews. The four interview questions modified to match the interview condition were either low in face validity, illegal and non-gender relevant, or illegal and gender-relevant, depending on condition. Saks and McCarthy (2006) found that four illegal interview questions out of ten showed significant difference from no illegal interview questions in their original study, which is why we employed four questions as the manipulation in the current study. Wording was kept as similar as possible for the four manipulated interview questions.

The control condition in this study included low face-valid questions. Specifically, these questions appeared unrelated to the consulting job; however, these questions still assessed constructs that could be related to job performance (i.e., conscientiousness and extraversion). For example, an item assessing conscientiousness was

“Do you make extravagant or thrifty purchases? If so, which ones?” (Schmidt & Hunter, 1998; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). An illegal interview question in the non-gender relevant interview that had similar wording to the low face-valid control was "Do you belong to a church or religious group? If so, which ones?", whereas the gender relevant illegal interview condition question was “Do you have any children? If so, how many?”. All of these example questions were asked as the ninth question in the interview (See Appendix B for all interview questions).

The questions all had a ‘please respond before moving on’ prompt appear if nothing was filled into the text box entry. Although participants could not be forced to respond due to the nature of the questions being illegal, a requirement to be included in the final analysis was that participants responded to the majority of questions in a coherent and reasonable sense. Of note, some participants responded to the illegal questions by saying they did not feel comfortable answering the question and would like to move on. This was accepted as a reasonable answer and these participants were included in the final dataset.

After viewing the website and answering the interview questions, participants filled out the self-report survey items. These surveys were presented in randomized order and included belonging, trust and comfort, organizational attractiveness, and intentions to pursue a job (see below for description of measures). Participants completed the procedural justice perceptions measure after the organizational reaction measures to avoid priming participants’ awareness of injustice while completing the organizational reaction measures. Finally, participants completed a measure assessing their perceptions that the questions were face-valid.

After participants completed all the primary outcomes, they indicated their demographic information. These items included parental status, job status, disability status, and whether they were currently actively looking in the job market. Because of a coding error, age was added as a demographic only for the second half of participants. A final attention check question was included at the end of the survey, which asked participants to briefly describe what they did during the study. Unintelligible answers to the attention check led to immediate exclusion from the study. Those who did not complete the attention check were not immediately excluded but were checked to see whether the majority of their interview responses were valid. If the majority of responses were valid, they were still included in the study. If they were not reasonable responses to the interview questions, this was used as a second attention check to exclude them.

Participants

The participants consisted of Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) users who were 18 or older. Participants were reimbursed through MTurk and paid \$2.00 each for approximately twenty minutes of survey time. A total of 500 participants were collected in two waves with Amazon MTurk, collecting 300 participants, examining whether there was a reasonable gender balance, and then collecting 200 more participants after confirming that there were an equal number of men and women.

Participants were recruited who were 18 or older with no limit to the top of the age range. An older participant population allowed for the possibility of relevant life experiences to some of the illegal interview questions (e.g. marriage, children), producing a higher chance of negative reactions to the illegal questions. I achieved this benefit of relevance by recruiting adults through MTurk, rather than using a student sample. The

average age of marriage in the US is 27 for women and 30 for men (US Census Nov 15 2017) and the average age of a woman having her first child is within in her late 20's (28 to be exact; CDC 2017). To build demographic understanding of relevance to participants, items included whether participants were married (254, 51.0%), have children (256, 51.4%), or have a disability (67, 13.5%). About half of the participants indicated being married, having children, and a bit more than 13% indicated having a disability. Participants were asked whether they were currently looking for a job as well, with less than 3% currently looking (14, 2.8%). Over 90% (90.8%, 454) were currently employed either full time or part time.

Participants were excluded if they did not identify as male or female (3 people, 0.6%) and those who did not indicate they were currently living in the US (13, 2.6%). The remaining responses were examined and participants were excluded who gave incoherent or unreasonable answers (11, 2.2%), those who copy and pasted responses from the internet or survey prompt (35, 7%), those who responded and gave too short of responses for an interview question (ex: “good” and “yes” for the majority of responses) (60, 12%), and three individuals who fell under an ‘other’ category (3, 0.6%) who gave intelligible but extreme responses that would likely not be given in a true interview. Two people reviewed the incoherent and unreasonable responses. Upon disagreement, the participant was left in the survey pool. This left us with a final participant count of 375 usable surveys. A chi-square analysis showed that excluded participants did not vary consistently across conditions from those included in the study ($\chi^2(2, N = 484) = 1.36, p = .508$).

Of these final participants, slightly over half were male (201 or 53.6%; female = 174 or 46.4%) and the majority of participants were White (264 or 70.4%; Black = 44 or 11.7%; Asian = 35 or 9.3%; Hispanic or Latin@ = 23 or 6.1%; Multi-racial = 7 or 1.9%; American Indian or Alaska Native = 2 or 0.5%). A sensitivity analysis was run with G*Power for fixed effects ANOVA. At .80 power and a final sample size of 375 participants, to find an effect at $p < .05$ this study was powered to find an effect size $f = 0.160$.

Measures

Intentions to Pursue a Job. Intentions to Pursue a Job (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003) was used to measure participants' likelihood to pursue and/or accept a position at the company. Past work has found this scale to be reliable (Carless & Imber, 2007). In the current research this was found to be a reliable scale as well ($\alpha = .92$). Example items include "I would make Uptown Consulting one of my first choices as an employer" and "I would accept a job offer from Uptown Consulting." Participants responded with a 5-point Likert scale, (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. (Questions in Appendix C) ($m = 3.67$, $SD = 1.00$)

Organizational Attractiveness. (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). Organizational Attractiveness was used to measure participants' views of how appealing the company is. Past work has found this scale is reliable (Carless & Imber, 2007). In the current research, this was a reliable scale ($\alpha = .91$). Example items include "A job at Uptown Consulting would be very appealing to me" and "I would not be interested in Uptown Consulting except as a last resort" (reverse scored). Participants responded with

a 5-point Likert scale, (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. (Questions in Appendix C) ($m = 3.64$, $SD = 1.00$)

Belonging & Trust and Comfort. To examine participants' social identity threat after they viewed the illegal interview questions, participants completed scales assessing Belonging (Good, Rattan, & Dweck, 2012; Walton & Cohen, 2007) and Trust & Comfort (Purdie-Vaughns, Steele, Davies, Dittmann, & Crosby, 2008). Both scales have been found in previous studies to be reliable measures (Pietri, Johnson, & Ozgumus, 2018). Belonging consists of 8 items found to have had an intercorrelation of .89, while Trust & Comfort consists of 4 items found to have had an intercorrelation of .87. An example item for Belonging is "People at Uptown Consulting would like me" while an example item for Trust & Comfort is "I would be treated fairly by my colleagues at Uptown Consulting." Participants responded with a 5-point Likert scale, (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. (Questions in Appendix C) (Belonging $m = 3.66$, $SD = 0.82$) (Trust & Comfort $m = 3.62$, $SD = 0.92$)

Justice Perceptions. Justice Perceptions (Colquitt, 2001) was used to measure participants' procedural justice perceptions of the interview process. This measure consists of 6 items found to be a reliable measure (Colquitt et al., 2001). Items were changed to make the tense appropriate and clarify that the procedure was the interview. In the current research, the six items that were employed focused on procedural justice and this remained a reliable scale ($\alpha = .84$). An example item is "Was the interview free of bias?". All items use a 5-point scale where 1 = *To a Very Small Extent* and 5 = *To a Very Large Extent*. (Questions in Appendix C) ($m = 3.63$, $SD = 0.90$)

Face Validity. Face Validity (Chan & Schmitt, 1997) was used to measure participants' perceptions that the interview questions asked were pertinent and relevant to the job position. This measure consists of 5 items found to have a Cronbach's alpha of .86. An example item is "I could not see any relationship between the interview and what I think is required by the job tasks." Items were reverse scored where necessary. All items use a 5-point scale Likert, (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. (Questions in Appendix C) ($m = 3.72$, $SD = 0.87$).

Results & Analyses

All measures were found to significantly correlate with each other (see Table 1).

Four organizational outcomes measures were all correlated at .82 or higher: intent to pursue, organizational attraction, belonging, and trust & comfort. Because these scales are all highly correlated, they appeared to be measuring the same “Organizational Reactions” construct. A factor analysis was performed which showed that all items fell onto two factors. However, the second scale consisted only of items that were reverse-scored (See Table 4). Thus, I z-scored each of these measures, averaged the z-scores, and created an organizational reactions z-score composite index of all the items combined (see Table 2 and 3 for its inclusion).

Table 1

Correlations across outcome variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Intentions to Pursue a Job	-	.				
2. Organizational Attractiveness	.90 ^{***}	-				
3. Belonging	.81 ^{***}	.83 ^{***}	-			
4. Trust & Comfort	.84 ^{***}	.83 ^{***}	.82 ^{***}	-		
5. Justice Perceptions	.71 ^{***}	.67 ^{***}	.66 ^{***}	.70 ^{***}	-	
6. Face Validity	.52 ^{***}	.54 ^{***}	.61 ^{***}	.48 ^{***}	.60 ^{***}	-

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

To test the hypotheses, ANOVAs predicting the primary outcomes from interview condition, gender, and the interaction between the two were run (See Table 2). The differences between the three conditions for men and women were explored using a Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons.

Table 2

ANOVA results with Interview Condition

Measure	Gender			Interview Condition			Gender × Interview Condition		
	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	η_p^2	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	η_p^2	<i>F</i> -value	<i>p</i> -value	η_p^2
Trust & Comfort	13.370	<.001	.035	8.484	<.001	.044	6.068	<.001	.041
Org Attraction	9.689	.002	.026	10.799	<.001	.055	7.351	.001	.038
Belonging	4.122	.043	.011	9.190	<.001	.047	7.351	.001	.038
Intent to Pursue	9.667	.002	.026	9.143	<.001	.047	8.083	<.001	.042
Organizational Reactions (composite)	8.994	.003	.025	11.549	<.001	.061	8.435	<.001	.045
Procedural Justice	19.228	<.001	.050	35.264	<.001	.160	10.752	<.001	.055
Face-Valid	2.283	.132	.006	15.380	<.001	.077	5.556	.004	.029

Table 3

Means and SD by Study Condition Across Gender.¹

	Men			Women		
	Control	Non-gender illegal	Gender illegal	Control	Non-gender illegal	Gender illegal
Measure	M (SD) N= 73	M (SD) N= 66	M (SD) N= 62	M (SD) N= 54	M (SD) N= 66	M (SD) N= 54
Trust & Comfort	3.76(.71) _a	3.85(.65) _a	3.72(.94) _a	3.93(.66) _a	3.39(1.12) _b	3.03(1.05) _b
Organizational Attraction	3.80(.93) _a	3.82(.66) _a	3.74(.98) _a	4.07(.60) _a	3.38(1.14) _b	3.00(1.24) _b
Belonging	3.74(.69) _a	3.80(.64) _a	3.66(.89) _a	4.02(.54) _a	3.45(.90) _b	3.24(.98) _b
Intent to Pursue	3.82(.89) _a	3.87(.69) _a	3.77(.98) _a	4.05(.72) _a	3.43(1.17) _b	3.04(1.19) _b
Organizational Reactions	.142(.807) a	.210(.615) a	.034(.975) a	.394(.564) a	-.229(1.09) b	-.623(1.15)b
Procedural Justice	3.98(.64) _a	3.86(.58) _a	3.56(.91) _b	4.16(.60) _a	3.28(1.06) _b	2.86(.91) _c
Face-Valid	3.87(.72) _a	3.82(.79) _a	3.63(.94) _a	4.10(.72) _a	3.67(.86) _b	3.15(.96) _c

Note: shared subscript for men and women respectively indicates not significant difference at the $p = .05$ degree or greater. This subscript does not translate across gender comparison, however.

¹ A Factor Analysis of the items for these four measures, accounting for those that are reverse-scored and recalculated, there is a high trend towards a one factor loading. The one-factor model accounts for much of the variance.

Table 4.

Factor Analysis of Reaction Items

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2
Intentions to Pursue a Job		
1. I would accept a job offer from Uptown Consulting.	.785	.300
2. I would make Uptown Consulting one of my first choices as an employer.	.804	.273
3. If Uptown Consulting invited me for a job interview, I would go.	.746	.329
4. I would exert a great deal of effort to work for Uptown Consulting.	.776	.341
5. I would recommend Uptown Consulting to a friend looking for a job.	.790	.266
Organizational Attractiveness		
1. For me, Uptown Consulting would be a good place to work.	.812	.348
2. I would not be interested in Uptown Consulting except as a last resort. (<i>R</i>)	.324	.677
3. Uptown Consulting would be attractive to me as a place for employment.	.844	.295
4. I would be interested in learning more about Uptown Consulting.	.813	.286
5. A job at Uptown Consulting would be very appealing to me.	.811	.350
Belonging		
1. I could "be myself" at Uptown Consulting.	.768	.316
2. My colleagues at Uptown Consulting would likely become my close personal friends.	.719	.180
3. I would be treated fairly by my colleagues at Uptown Consulting.	.762	.228
4. I think my values and the values of my colleagues at Uptown Consulting are very similar.	.774	.306
Trust and Comfort		
1. People at Uptown Consulting would like me.	.614	.381
2. People Uptown Consulting would be a lot like me.	.683	.213
3. I would belong at Uptown Consulting.	.784	.290
4. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel like an outsider. (<i>R</i>)	.244	.857
5. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel respected.	.735	.325
6. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel excluded. (<i>R</i>)	.289	.784
7. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel anxious. (<i>R</i>)	.267	.793
8. At Uptown Consulting, I would enjoy being an active participant.	.756	.272

Note: Items labeled (R) were reverse-coded before analysis

Organizational Reactions

Supporting Hypothesis 1, there was a main effect of interview condition predicting Organizational Reactions ($F_{1,5} = 9.150, p < .001$). Compared to participants who responded to the control interview, participants in the non-gender illegal condition had significantly lower organizational reactions, $p = .042, d = 0.316, \text{Mean Difference} = .278, SE = .112, 95\% \text{ CI} [.008, .548]$. In line with the predictions, it was also found that relative to participants who responded to the control interview, participants in the gender-relevant illegal interview condition had significantly lower organizational reactions, $p < .001, d = 0.564, \text{Mean Difference} = .563, SE = .117, 95\% \text{ CI} [.281, .844]$. In the final comparison between the non-gender illegal interview condition, the gender relevant illegal interview condition had the most negative organizational reactions overall, $p = .043, d = 0.264, \text{Mean Difference} = .285, SE = .116, 95\% \text{ CI} [.006, .563]$. This was qualified by a gender by condition interaction ($p < .001$; see Table 2).

Examining this interaction, for men there was no significant difference between men who took the control interview and men who took the non-gender illegal interview, $p = .999, d = -0.095, \text{Mean Difference} = -.068, SE = .153, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.436, .300]$. For male participants who took the control interview and male participants who took the gender-relevant illegal interview condition, there continued to be no significant difference in organizational reactions, $p = .999, d = 0.121, \text{Mean Difference} = .108, SE = .158, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.271, .487]$. Finally, among men, there was no significant difference between the non-gender and gender-relevant illegal interview conditions, $p = .825, d = 0.216, \text{Mean Difference} = .176, SE = .161, 95\% \text{ CI} [-.211, .563]$. Following the examination of men's organizational reactions, the organizational reactions among women were analyzed.

Compared to female participants who took the control interview, female participants who took the non-gender interview condition had significantly lower organizational reactions, $p = .001$, $d = 0.717$, *Mean Difference* = .624, *SE* = .165, 95% CI [.228, 1.020]. In comparison to the control interview female participants, women who took the gender-relevant interview also had significantly lower organizational reactions, $p < .001$, $d = 1.120$, *Mean Difference* = 1.017, *SE* = .173, 95% CI [.601, 1.433]. There was a trend for women in the gender-relevant illegal interview condition to have lower reactions than those in the non-gender illegal interview condition but this difference was not significant, $p = .056$, $d = 0.350$, *Mean Difference* = .393, *SE* = .166, 95% CI [-.007, .794].

Thus, support for Hypothesis 4 was found, in that women had more negative reactions towards illegal interview questions than men. However, these findings also demonstrate that Hypothesis 1 was only partially supported, and illegal interview questions only harmed women's, not men's, organizational reactions (*See Figure 4*).

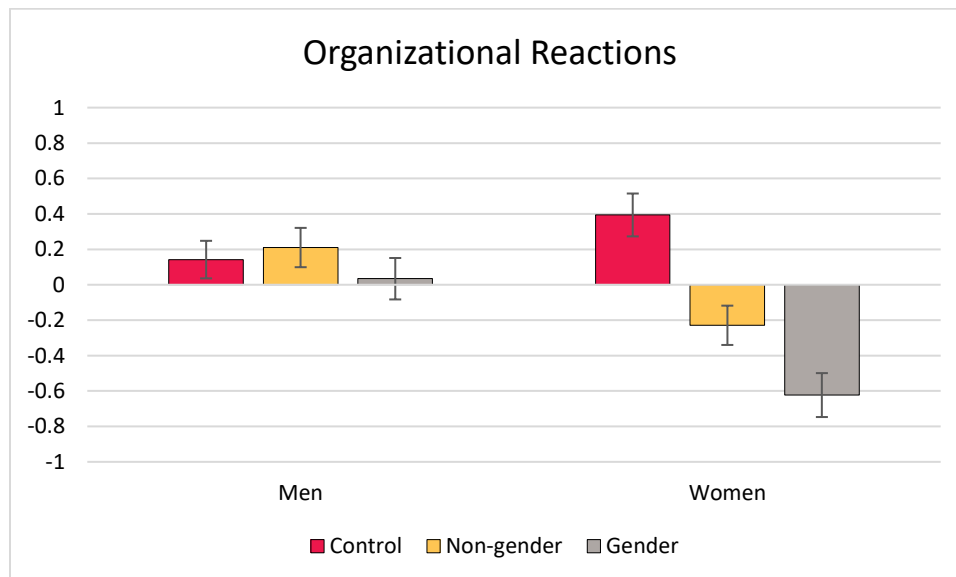


Figure 4. Graphical representation of organizational company reactions results.

Procedural Justice

Looking at procedural justice perceptions overall, there was a main effect of condition. Upon first examination of the control interview versus the non-gender illegal interview condition, the data shows that participants who took the non-gender illegal interview had significantly lower procedural justice perceptions, $p < .001$, $d = 0.632$, *Mean Difference* = .504, *SE* = .100 95% CI [.262, .745]. Following this, it is seen that in comparison to the control condition, participants who took the gender-relevant illegal interview also had significantly lower procedural justice perceptions, $p < .001$, $d = 1.012$, *Mean Difference* = .865, *SE* = .104, 95% CI [.616, 1.115]. When comparing illegal interview condition participants, those who took the gender-relevant interview had significantly lower procedural justice perceptions than those who took the non-gender relevant interview, $p < .001$, $d = 0.361$, *Mean Difference* = .362, *SE* = .102, 95% CI [.116, .608]. In summary, the highest procedural justice perceptions occurred within the control condition, followed by the non-gender illegal, followed by the gender illegal interview condition. This supports Hypothesis 2 that illegal interview questions lead to lower procedural justice perceptions. These effects are qualified by a gender by condition interaction ($p < .001$; see Table 2).

To assess whether there is a gender by condition interaction, I first examined the male participants' procedural justice perceptions. In comparison to men who took the control interview, men who took the non-gender relevant illegal interview did not have significantly lower procedural justice perceptions, $p = .999$, $d = 0.203$, *Mean Difference* = .124, *SE* = .136, 95% CI [-.204, .452]. However, when comparing men who took the control interview to men who took the gender-relevant illegal interview, there were

significantly lower procedural justice perceptions, $p = .006$, $d = 0.544$, *Mean Difference* = .428, $SE = .139$, 95% CI [.095, .762]. When comparing men in the non-gender and gender relevant illegal interview conditions, a significant difference in procedural justice perceptions did not occur, $p = .097$, $d = 0.400$, *Mean Difference* = .305, $SE = .142$, 95% CI [-.037, .646]. When examining the procedural justice perceptions of women, women in the non-gender relevant interview condition had significantly lower perceptions than women in the control condition, $p < .001$, $d = 1.026$, *Mean Difference* = .883, $SE = .148$, 95% CI [.529, 1.237]. This pattern continued when comparing women in the control condition to women in the gender-relevant interview condition, $p < .001$, $d = 1.687$, *Mean Difference* = 1.302, $SE = .154$, 95% CI [.930, 1.673]. In a comparison of women in the illegal interview conditions, women in the gender-relevant condition had significantly lower procedural justice perceptions than women in the non-gender relevant condition, $p = .014$, $d = 0.424$, *Mean Difference* = .419, $SE = .147$, 95% CI [.064, .773].

Overall, there existed a main effect of condition and a gender by condition interaction. Men were significantly lower for the gender-relevant illegal condition while women significantly differed between all three conditions (See Table 3). This supported Hypothesis 5 that illegal interview questions would lead to lower procedural justice perceptions, with women having lower procedural justice perceptions than men. These overall results lent support that there is lower social identity threat for men than women when illegal interview questions are present (See Figure 5).

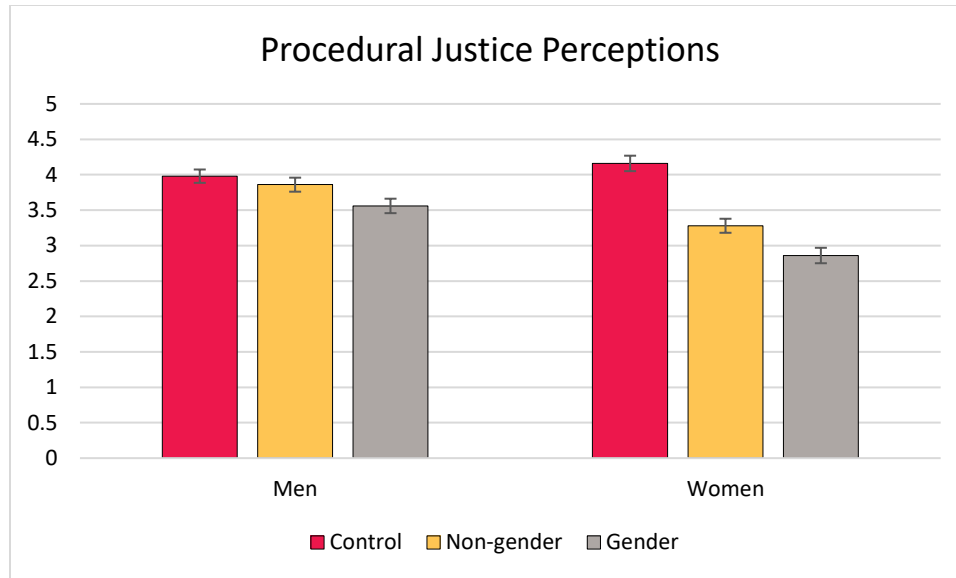


Figure 5. Graphical representation of procedural justice perceptions results.

Face Validity

While analyzing face validity overall, in comparison to the control condition, the non-gender relevant condition did not have significantly lower perceptions of face validity, $p = .060$, $d = 0.291$, *Mean Difference* = .243, $SE = .104$, 95% CI [-.007, .493]. However, in comparison to the control, the gender-relevant interview condition did show significantly lower perceptions of face validity, $p < .001$, $d = 0.653$, *Mean Difference* = .594, $SE = .108$, 95% CI [.335, .853]. In measuring face validity perceptions between the two illegal interview conditions, the gender-relevant condition did have significantly lower perceptions of face validity than the non-gender relevant condition, $p = .003$, $d = 0.370$, *Mean Difference* = .351, $SE = .106$, 95% CI [.096, .606]. For face validity perceptions, there existed a main effect of condition. This main effect was qualified by a gender by condition interaction ($p = .004$; see Table 2).

Examining this relationship further, there was a significant interaction of gender. Starting with men, there were no significant differences in face validity perceptions between men in the control condition and men in the non-gender interview condition, $p = .999$, $d = 0.070$, *Mean Difference* = .052, *SE* = .141, 95% CI [-.287, .392]. When comparing men in the control condition to men in the gender-relevant interview condition, there continued to be no significant difference in face validity perceptions, $p = .144$, $d = 0.284$, *Mean Difference* = .236, *SE* = .144, 95% CI [-.109, .582]. Between the two illegal interview conditions, men in the non-gender condition did not find the questions to be any less face-valid than men in the gender-relevant condition, $p = .636$, $d = 0.213$, *Mean Difference* = .184, *SE* = .147, 95% CI [-.170, .538]. To see if women followed this trend, women in the control condition were compared to women in the non-gender interview condition and it was found that their face validity perceptions were significantly lower in the non-gender condition, $p = .014$, $d = 0.547$, *Mean Difference* = .434, *SE* = .153, 95% CI [.067, .801]. Women also had significantly lower face validity perceptions in the gender-relevant interview condition in comparison to the control condition, $p < .001$, $d = 1.122$, *Mean Difference* = .952, *SE* = .160, 95% CI [.567, 1.337]. When comparing the illegal interview conditions, women significantly differed between the non-gender relevant condition and the gender-relevant condition as well, $p = .002$, $d = 0.567$, *Mean Difference* = .518, *SE* = .153, 95% CI [.151, .885].

Overall, for men, there were no significant differences on the composite measure, but for women, they were significantly different face validity perceptions between all conditions. Thus, a main effect of condition existed and a gender by condition interaction for perceptions of the face validity of the interview questions (*See Figure 6*).

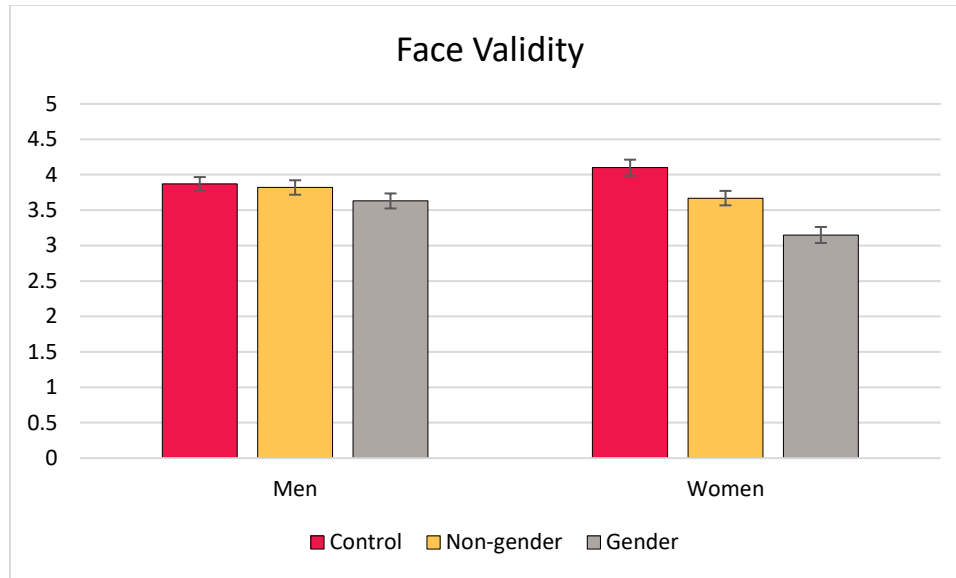


Figure 6. Graphical representation of face validity perceptions results.

Full Model

To test the full moderated mediation model and Hypothesis 3, Hayes (2018) PROCESS model 8 with moderation on the 'a' and 'c' path of the mediation model was used. These analyses allowed the exploration of whether the indirect effect of illegal interview questions conditions on reactions to the organization via justice perceptions was stronger for women than men. The results from this showed us that the indirect effect of procedural justice perceptions was significant for men in the control vs gender condition (Control vs non-gender = -0.10, CI [-0.26, 0.05]; Control vs gender = -0.37, CI [-0.59, -0.16]) and women for both paths (Control vs non-gender = -0.65, CI [-0.91, -0.41]; Control vs gender = -1.01, CI [-1.26, -0.76]) but that the total c path was only

significant for women (See Figures 7 and 8). Moreover, the indirect effect was higher for women than for men (See Figures 7 and 8).²

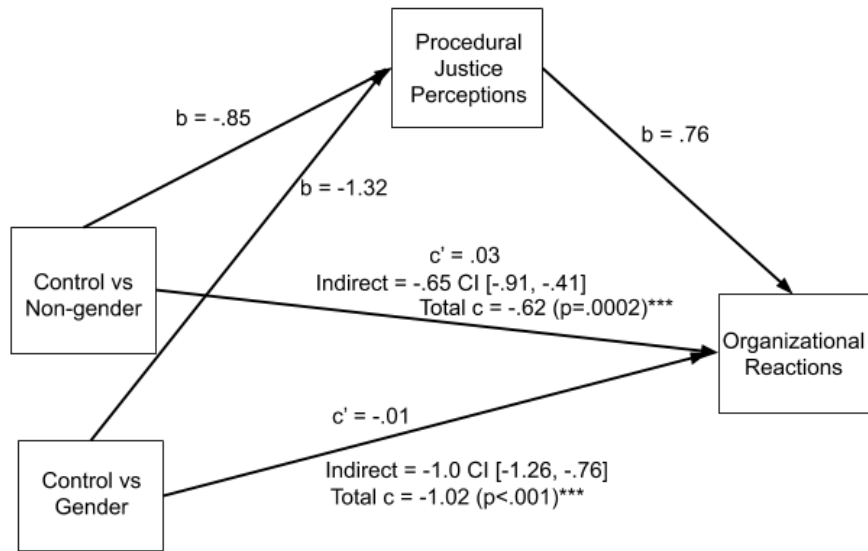


Figure 7. Pictorial representation of directional relationships for women.

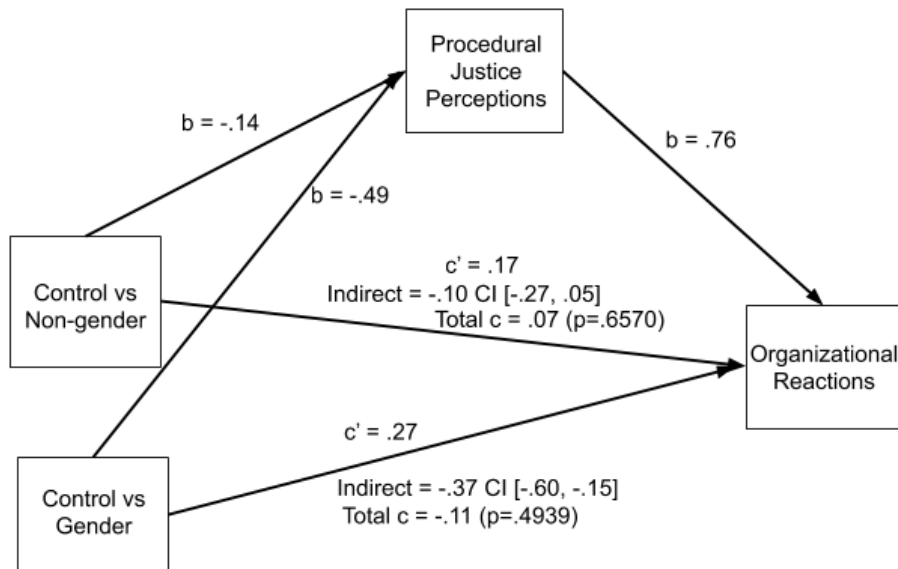


Figure 8. Pictorial representation of directional relationships for men.

² When procedural justice is the outcome, the indirect effect of organizational reactions was not significant for men (Control vs non-gender = 0.076, CI [-0.11, 0.19]; Control vs gender = -0.07, CI [-0.26, 0.13]) but was significant for women (Control vs non-gender = -0.386, CI [-0.59, -0.20]; Control vs gender = -0.630, CI [-0.85, -0.41]).

Discussion

It is imperative that we have selection techniques that are validated and that do not disproportionately discriminate against marginalized groups, as well as equally promote men's and women's success. The objective of this study was to investigate how illegal interviews harm perceptions of an organization and uniquely harm female prospective employees. Thus, the current work explored the potential detrimental impact of illegal interview questions. In line with Hypothesis 1, as well as previous work on illegal interviews (see Saks and McCarthy, 2006), it was found that relative to participants who answered low face-valid non-illegal questions, participants who responded to illegal interview questions (both related and unrelated to gender) had more negative reactions towards the company (e.g., lower anticipated belonging & trust in the organization, less organizational attractiveness, and lower job pursuit intentions).

Specifically, participants in the gender-relevant illegal interview questions condition had the most negative reactions, followed by those in the non-gender relevant condition, and participants in the low face-valid control condition. In support of Hypothesis 2, a main effect of condition on procedural justice was found. Participants reported the highest procedural justice perceptions in the low face-valid control condition, followed by the non-gender illegal condition, and the gender-illegal interview questions condition. Finally, there was a main effect of condition on perceptions that the questions were face valid. Participants found the gender-relevant illegal interview condition to have significantly lower face validity than the control condition and non-gender relevant illegal condition, both of which did not differ significantly between each other.

Of importance, there was a significant gender by condition interaction on all outcome measures, supporting Hypotheses 4 and 5. Among women, relative to the non-face-valid questions, both the gender relevant and non-gender relevant illegal interview questions resulted in more negative reactions to the organization, lower procedural justice beliefs, and lower perceptions of face validity. In contrast, there was no effect of condition for men, with the exception of men having significantly lower procedural justice perceptions in the gender relevant condition relative to the control condition. Thus, in contrast to initial predictions (see Hypothesis 1), support was not found for illegal interview questions harming men. Instead, these findings align with theories on social identity threat, suggesting that illegal interview questions can act as a threatening cue that harms women during the selection phase (Cheryan et al., 2009; Murphy & Taylor, 2012) but not men. Although men found the gender-relevant illegal questions to appear unjust, men also felt the questions had face-validity and were relevant to the job role. This perception of relevance may be an important separation between men and women. Men felt that this injustice is at the same time warranted for the job interview; as such, they may be more likely than women to continue the interview, respond to the questions, or perhaps even ask these questions if they are the interviewer.

Finally, supporting Hypothesis 3, justice perceptions acted as a significant mediator for interview condition's effect on organizational reactions. Once again demonstrating the harmful influence of illegal interview questions for women, the indirect effect of interview condition on reactions to the organization via justice perceptions was stronger for women than for men. Taken together, the current findings demonstrate that illegal interview questions (both those related to gender and unrelated to

gender) act as identity threat cues for women and harm women's attraction to the organization, whereas men are primarily unaffected by these illegal questions. Moreover, believing the company lacked procedural justice was an important mediator for the effect of illegal interview questions on organizational reactions.

Theoretical Implications

Saks and McCarthy (2006) explored how illegal interview questions influence the applicant reactions of an organization. These researchers demonstrated that having four illegal interview questions acted as a strong enough 'threshold' to evoke negative reactions from applicants. The current research builds off this previous study in multiple ways. First, this study introduced procedural justice perceptions as an explanatory mechanism for the negative reactions that result from illegal interview questions. This work demonstrated that justice perceptions occur and form even before entering the organization. Moreover, illegal interview questions are one antecedent for negative justice perceptions prior to working in an organization. This study also added to previous research by including low face-valid questions as a control condition. This allowed for better control of reactions resulting from questions appearing unrelated to the position and reactions to illegal content. Although these questions were low in face-validity (i.e., seemed job irrelevant), they were modeled after the Big Five concepts of conscientiousness and extraversion, items that have been used in selection and can predict job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Hertz & Donovan, 2000).

This study further added to past research by finding a significant interaction between interview condition and gender. Saks and McCarthy (2006) did not find an interaction between gender and illegal interview conditions; however, these researchers

may have been underpowered to find the interaction. Moreover, Saks and McCarthy (2006) did not include a condition with illegal interview questions that were specifically focused on gender. To address these limitations, I collected more participants and included a condition with gender-relevant illegal questions which might be particularly threatening for women during the interview process. Because people generally stereotype women as fulfilling the homemaker role (i.e., taking care of the home and children, Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012), the gender-relevant illegal questions were chosen to be related to family planning and marriage. Marriage and family are relevant for both men and women, but often only burden and harm the careers of working women (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Wood, 2012). Thus, unlike Saks and McCarthy (2006), this study conceptualized illegal interview questions acting as social identity threat cues for women. As a result, questions that specifically target gender stereotypes were included and these gender-relevant illegal interview questions were threatening to women and decreased their interest in an organization.

Unexpectedly, the non-gender relevant questions acted as threatening cues for women as well. However, this finding aligns with recent work demonstrating that threatening cues can transfer between stigmatized groups (Sanchez et al., 2017). This previous work relies on the assumption that those who may be prejudiced and discriminate against one marginalized group (e.g., persons with disabilities, or non-US natives, etc.) may also discriminate against another marginalized group (e.g., women Allport, 1954; Sanchez, Chaney, Manuel, Wilton, & Remedios, 2017). Recent evidence has shown this stigma by prejudice transfer, where prejudice directed at one stigmatized group can arouse threat in members of another, nontargeted, stigmatized group (Sanchez

et al., 2017). Indeed, work supporting the stigma by prejudice transfer perspective has demonstrated that when women know an organization devalues Black employees, women expect the organization will also mistreat women (Sanchez et al., 2017). The non-gender relevant questions still inquired about protected classes (national origin, disability, religion). Although these questions did not ask about gender-relevant information, they potentially highlighted that the company devalues marginalized groups, which in turn suggests the company also devalues women. Women and minorities face stereotypes and scrutinization around their competence in the workforce, with these questions highlighting that identity threat for both groups but containing greater threatening cues for women in the gender-relevant interview condition.

Practical Implications

The current study has important implications for the content interviewers present during the selection process. These findings suggest that organizations should consider the usage of structured interviews and avoid illegal interview questions altogether. Questions that may highlight gender stereotypes due to their wording should also be avoided (e.g. asking a woman interviewing for a management position if she can be strong and tough with others). Presenting interviews in a structured format promotes the vetting of interview questions before the interview and dissuades the introduction of questions unrelated to the position that may be illegal. The introduction of illegal interview questions may reduce the diversity of applicants and may cause female candidates to self-select out due to their negative perceptions of the organization. Moreover, applicants who self-select out due to interview content could create a compounding effect by dissuading other future applicants from applying to the company

as a result of their own discomfort or negative justice perceptions. For organizations to reduce gender disparities during the hiring process, it is crucial they avoid using any illegal questions that can trigger social identity threat among women. Any part of the job selection process that might entail some form of unfairness should receive recruiters' full attention; while the job selection process is dynamic, they can still control their side of this interplay.

Interviewers' use of increased structured interviews and understanding of illegal interview questions would produce fewer lawsuits for an organization. Previous research has found applicants who perceive a selection technique as invasive or inappropriate may be more likely to sue an organization than applicants who perceive the process as fair and face-valid (Smither et al., 1993). Although low face-valid questions can be effective job predictors, applicants have been found to have negative reactions to low face-valid content, even without the presence of illegal content (Hausknecht et al., 2004). People are more likely to sue an organization if they feel the questions were low in face-validity, whether hiring decisions were based upon those item responses or not (Smither et al., 1993). They are presented even more reasonable and justifiable grounds for this when these items include illegal content. Not asking illegal interview questions reduces the suspected, and potential, grounds that any employment decisions were made on bias.

Limitations & Future Directions

There were several limitations to this study that provide opportunities for important future research. One limitation was the ambiguity of one of the low face-valid control interview questions. Specifically, the question asking "Are you the life of the party?" may have been interpreted as sexual harassment; questioning their sexual

promiscuity at parties, rather than their level of extraversion. Generally, there were still significantly more negative reactions between the control condition to the illegal conditions, but some may consider using an alternative question for future study replications.

Another limitation of the study design is the format: it was online, and these were not observed interviews. Moreover, these interviews were not for real jobs and involved a fictional company. Given that many interviews occur in-person, this online format may have influenced how strongly the questions affected the participants. For example, if participants did not take the online interview as seriously as they would a 'true' in-person interview, participants may not have as strong of a reaction to the illegal interview questions, weakening this manipulation. This may explain why there were insignificant results among men. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that strong effects for women remained even in this more neutral online setting.

The benefit of putting the interview online meant that all aspects of the interview were kept consistent across conditions except for the illegal questions. Indeed, all questions were asked in the same manner, presented in the same order, and participants could take as much time as they wanted to respond to each question. However, most interviews are in-person and thus have interviewer behavioral influences and are dynamic in nature. In an in-person interview, people can notice the inflection of a question, ask for clarification about a question, or interpret the interviewer's face or body language during a question. All these factors can in turn influence responses to illegal interview questions.

The online format also prevented us from exploring perceptions and consequences of interactional justice (i.e., beliefs about interpersonal interactions with the interviewer).

Applicants may perceive a lack of interactional justice when an interviewer inquires questions in a rude manner. In contrast, if the interviewer asks questions in a polite and respectful tone, even if they are illegal or inappropriate, interactional justice may not be harmed (Colquitt et al. 2001). In contrast, because procedural justice concerns the fairness of the procedures used during the interview (Colquitt et al. 2001), illegal questions may always harm procedural justice beliefs, even when they are asked politely. Illegal interview questions also may lead to low distributive justice perceptions (i.e., beliefs that outcomes are not fairly distributed), if applicants believe they did not receive a job because of information they discussed when asked an illegal question (e.g., that they have children or are not married). Because there were no outcomes associated with this fictional interview, distributive justice could not be assessed. In future research, it will be important to explore these research questions with in-person interviews and look at interactional and distributive justice perceptions. Moreover, in future work, participants could be told that they will receive feedback about whether or not they would receive a job offer based on their performance. By having a clear outcome associated with the interview, an assessment of distributive justice could be included. Moreover, in-person interviews would allow us to include an assessment of interactive justice. In-person interviews might also encourage participants to take the interview seriously and not skip questions or copy answers from the internet such as those who were excluded in the current study.

Another limitation of the current research was it did not rely on unstructured interviews. Given the research questions and format, an unstructured interview could not be relied on as this lack of structure would not allow for the manipulation of the exact

question asked during the interview (i.e., in unstructured interviews a variety of questions may be asked based on the conversational flow). As previously mentioned however, unstructured interviews are still commonly used in the workforce (Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). Although unstructured interviews can lead to the inclusion of illegal questions, some applicants may feel more comfortable with an unstructured interview and feel that the interview is less of an 'interrogation' and more of a conversation (Wagner, 1949; Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). As a result, the structured versus unstructured nature of an interview may influence participants' comfort or discomfort during the interview (Campion et al. 1997; Huffcutt & Culbertson, 2011). The structure of these interviews may have created a rigidity that caused applicants to feel more tense and attribute that feeling to the interview questions. However, across all conditions, applicants were in a structured interview setting, and thus, these study effects can be attributed to this rigidity.

An important consideration for future studies and organizations to consider is how long illegal interview questions' effects on reactions to the organization and justice perceptions last. In future research it will be important to explore how long negative reactions towards an organization last after these illegal interview questions have been asked and whether these questions ultimately influence decisions to accept a job from the company. It will also be important to examine how illegal interview questions might influence feelings about an organization even after candidates accept a job offer. That is, will candidates still hold negative procedural justice perceptions after they begin working in an organization? Will the illegal interview questions continue to harm trust and belonging in the organization after the selection process? Future research could also

explore the long-term impact of illegal questions among individuals who do not join the organization. For instance, these questions might influence their product purchase choices (i.e., their decision to buy products from the company) or their likelihood of dissuading a friend from applying to that organization.

A final area for research is changing the content of the interview questions. This study included low face-valid control questions, non-gender relevant questions, and gender-relevant questions. Future studies could look at specific fields and ask questions that may be pertinent identity threat cues in those areas. A more in-depth exploration could provide us with new relationships and information on the influence of a person's background and chosen field. It is crucial that we keep in mind the power of identity within the interview process and how the presence of threatening cues can influence different groups of applicants.

In conclusion, this research demonstrated that illegal interview questions lead to more negative applicant reactions, and that this relationship is stronger for women than for men. Moreover, men in many instances did not have significantly more negative reactions beyond those arising out of the face validity concerns. This research, therefore, has practical implications for organizations in showing that the content of the interview question can compound the reactions to the question on top of its face validity, having a stronger influence on the female applicant pool than the male applicant pool. Thus, this work represents an important step in understanding the power of social identity threat for women in the workforce and the organizational outcomes that may influence their gender parity.

Appendices

Appendix A

Company Website:



Job description: UT Consulting is currently hiring new consultants. Consultants offer advice and expertise to customer service, IT, human resources, and finance and accounting organizations and individuals to help them achieve and improve their goals. These can include the areas of operations, profitability, management, and structure and strategy. General responsibilities include conducting surveys and interviews to understand the business, assessing the pros and cons of possible strategies, making recommendations for improvement, and implementing agreed solutions. Key skills include attention to detail, interpersonal skills, teamworking skills, and good oral and written communication skills.

Appendix B

Interview Questions:

- Valid questions used in each condition:
- Why are you interested in consulting?
- Do you have any previous consulting experience?
- Tell me about a time when you supported a difficult client. What was the outcome?
- Describe the last time you made a mistake or caved under pressure. What did you do to recover?
- What qualities should a successful consultant possess?
- What do you think you have to offer a company like Uptown Consulting?

Control – Low face-valid

- What is your level of cautiousness? (*Conscientiousness*)
- Are you the life of the party? In what ways? (*Extraversion*)
- Do you have any activities you are involved in? If so, please let us know which ones. (*Conscientiousness*)
- Do you make extravagant or thrifty purchases? If so, which ones?
(*Conscientiousness*)

Non-gender Illegal

- What is your date of birth? (*illegal*)
- Are you originally from another country? If so, what country? (*illegal*)

- Do you have any handicaps or disabilities? If so, please let us know which ones.
(illegal)
- Do you belong to a church or religious group? If so, which ones? *(illegal)*

Gender Illegal

- What is your marital status? *(illegal)*
- Are you expecting to take any paternity or maternity leave? If so, how soon?
(illegal)
- Do you currently use any form of birth control? If so, please let us know which ones. *(illegal)*
- Do you have any children? If so, how many? *(illegal)*

Appendix C

Intentions to Pursue a Job

1. I would accept a job offer from Uptown Consulting.
2. I would make Uptown Consulting one of my first choices as an employer.
3. If Uptown Consulting invited me for a job interview, I would go.
4. I would exert a great deal of effort to work for Uptown Consulting.
5. I would recommend Uptown Consulting to a friend looking for a job.

Organizational Attractiveness

1. For me, Uptown Consulting would be a good place to work.
2. I would not be interested in Uptown Consulting except as a last resort.
3. Uptown Consulting would be attractive to me as a place for employment.
4. I would be interested in learning more about Uptown Consulting.
5. A job at Uptown Consulting would be very appealing to me.

Belonging

1. I could "be myself" at Uptown Consulting.
2. My colleagues at Uptown Consulting would likely become my close personal friends.
3. I would be treated fairly by my colleagues at Uptown Consulting.
4. I think my values and the values of my colleagues at Uptown Consulting are very similar.

Trust and Comfort

1. People at Uptown Consulting would like me.
2. People Uptown Consulting would be a lot like me.
3. I would belong at Uptown Consulting.
4. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel like an outsider.
5. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel respected.
6. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel excluded.
7. At Uptown Consulting, I would feel anxious.
8. At Uptown Consulting, I would enjoy being an active participant.

Justice Perceptions – Procedural Justice:

1. Were you able to express your views during the interview?
2. Can you influence the decisions (i.e. hiring versus not) arrived at by the interview?
3. Was the interview applied consistently?
4. Were the procedures free of bias?
5. Were the procedures based on accurate information?
6. Did the interview uphold ethical and moral standards?

Face Validity

1. I did not understand what the interview had to do with the job.
2. I could not see any relationship between the interview and what I think is required by the job tasks.

3. It would be obvious to anyone that the interview is related to the job tasks.
4. The actual content of the interview was clearly similar to the job.
5. There was no real connection between the interview and the job.

Likert strongly disagree 1 to strongly agree 5

Attention checks

Please very briefly (in one or two sentences), describe what this study asked you to do

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Curriculum Vitae

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- **IUPUI Graduate Office Travel Grant**, received Fall 2018
- **UNI Dean's List**, Spring 2016, Fall 2017, Spring 2017
- **UNI Program of Distinction** (2017) Make a Difference Day - Domestic Violence Awareness

Professional Presentations

- **Beecham, J.G., Pietri, E. S., Johnson, I. R., & Ashburn-Nardo, L.** (2020, February). Can biracial women act as effective role models for Black women in STEM? Talk to be presented at Society for Personality and Social

Psychology Conference, New Orleans, Louisiana. (2019, February) Poster presented at Society for Personality and Social Psychology Conference, Portland, Oregon. (2018, July) Talk and poster presented at School of Science Multidisciplinary Symposium, Indianapolis, IN.

- **Beecham, J.G.**, Drawbaugh, M. L., Grabowski, M., & Devine, D. J. (2019, April). Deliberation Quality and the Likelihood of Conviction on Irrelevant Charges. Poster presented at the conference for the Midwestern Psychological Society. Chicago, IL.
- **Beecham, J. G.**, Butler, A. B., & Bass, B. L. (2017). Work-family conflict and alcohol use by Iowa parents in non-professional jobs. Poster presented in March at Research in the Capital, Des Moines, IA. Poster presented in April at University of Northern Iowa CSBS Student Research Conference, Cedar Falls, IA.

Research Experience

- **Research Assistant**, IUPUI, Eva Pietri, Fall 2017 – Present
 - Continuing research in how black female students identify with white female scientists, black female scientists, and ambiguous female scientists, and how this may influence whether they can relate to and see themselves in STEM.
 - Measuring how shared adversity influences connection to society versus groups with shared adversity experiences.

- Duties: Review articles, compile measures, run pilot of images to use, pilot study, analyze descriptive and correlational analyses, complete IRB application, organize research schedule, train research assistants, problem solve, find needed resources.
- **Research Assistant, IUPUI, Dennis Devine, Fall 2017 – August 2018**
 - Examining how jury deliberation quality may be influenced by fault lines and differences in group characteristics, and whether deliberation is thorough enough to identify charges that do not exist.
 - Duties: Review articles, compile measures, find jury examples to pilot, run pilot studies, take notes on participants discussion, review data, and work on IRB application.
- **Research Assistant, UNI, Adam Butler, Fall 2016**
 - Worked on pre-collected data for two separate studies: Work-family conflict and alcohol use by Iowa parents in non-professional jobs & Homesickness in College Students.
 - Duties: Review past journals, discuss possible antecedents and outcomes, examine collected data. Completed an IRB application as well as a descriptive and correlational analyses.

Professional Experience

- **Graduate Office Graduate Assistant, May 2019 – Present**
 - Duties: Creating surveys and responding to requests to better support our graduate student population. Considering timely graduate student concerns

and coordinating events and dialogues for students to learn about pertinent resources and information to support them during their time at IUPUI.

- **Institutional Research and Decision Support**, August 2018 – August 2019
 - Duties: coding qualitative data, analyzing data for reports, creating reports of large amounts of student survey information to distribute to campus departments.