AN EXAMINATION OF JOB APPLICANT FAVORABILITY

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AN EXAMINATION OF JOB APPLICANT FAVORABILITY

A Thesis

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Department of Psychology
Abstract

of

AN EXAMINATION OF JOB APPLICANT FAVORABILITY

by

Stacey Lynn Fuller

Interviewing job candidates is an important issue in organizations. Since individual interview style and interviewer biases can vary from interviewer to interviewer, different selection outcomes can occur. One method of controlling potential biases is to utilize structured interviews in lieu of more loosely based unstructured interviews. In this study, participants ($N = 142$) were given a resume of a fictional job applicant, a photograph of that represented an attractive or a unattractive fictional candidate, a fictional job description, and one of two sets of both vignettes and interview transcripts that represented different levels of interview structure. Participants then responded to items regarding their favorability of the fictional candidate. Results of the data indicated a statistically significant main effect of both interview structure and candidate attractiveness on favorability ratings. These results indicate that both candidate
attractiveness and level of interview structure can have an effect on applicant favorability in job interviews.

_____________________, Committee Chair
Rachel August, Ph.D.

_____________________
Date
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Interviewing job candidates is a very important aspect of employee selection. The job interview is one of the most extensively used selection methods in organizations, spanning across various career fields (Graves & Karren, 1996). Unfortunately, interviews are not considered to be objective levels of assessment, like a factual test. The interview process is open to interpretation and can lead to varying results among different interviewers.

According to Bragger, Kutcher, Morgan, and Firth (2002), interviewing can be a very subjective selection method that is open to perceptual biases of the interviewer. Consequently, qualified candidates may not receive job offers due to interview preferences. Organizations need to be aware of the flaws that exist when conducting interviews and try to combat these issues. This should enhance the success of an organization since the main goal of the job selection process is to acquire the most qualified and experienced candidate for the job.

Many years of research have demonstrated that the structuring of an interview is an effective way to improve candidate selection and to help control biases in the interview process (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997; Macan, 2009). Structured interviews allow for increased reliability and validity of the interview process. Since questions are pre-determined and candidates are not given an opportunity to ask questions until after the interview, the interviewer can focus specifically on the responses to the
questions and not on other extraneous factors. Another method of interviewing, the unstructured interview, does not yield high psychometric properties when compared to the structured interview. The unstructured method of interviewing is popular among interviewers and job candidates based on its loose conversational manner. Interviewers may feel the potential benefits of the structured interview are outweighed by its rigid style, and thus adopt an unstructured style in their hiring practices (Van Der See & Bakker, 2002). However, serious consideration should be taken toward adopting the structured method since this allows for better assessment of potential employees.

Selecting an employee who has a good organizational fit is crucial for organizations. Ensuring that sound interviewing practices, like the structured interview are used in organizations will help assist with overall success and productivity. Less organizational funds might therefore be allotted to terminating incompatible employees, and repeating the costly job selection process.

There are other extraneous factors, aside from interview structure, which can affect the outcome of an interview. One very obvious factor is the attractiveness of the job candidate. Beauty is a concept that can be variable from culture to culture, but basically describes a preferential form of attractiveness in an individual (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002). In our society beauty is extremely coveted, and can affect people’s transactions in a variety of personal and professional situations (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002). In fact, social psychology raises the possibility that individuals may use facial appearance as a basis for interpersonal judgments in as little as 100 ms of exposure to an individual (Willis & Todorov, 2006).
Depending on the gender of the interviewer, this preference for attractiveness may become even more salient. On an evolutionary basis, men may be more predisposed to pay attention to the attractiveness of an individual, especially if that individual happens to be female. Due to this evolutionary predisposition, men may be hardwired to favor attractiveness (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002). Further, many studies have suggested that men favor attractive women more than their unattractive counterparts (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002).

While there is a large body of research on the positive effects of interview structure, as well as people’s general preference for attractive individuals, and the impact of the gender of the interviewer on selection; there is a lack of research combining these three variables together. These variables combine together in everyday organizational life. Investigating these variables together in a systematic, empirical way may help to ensure that employers are aware of potential biases that may occur during interviews. It is important for employers to become more cognizant of these potentially interacting features during the interview process so that they can attempt to make employment decisions as fairly as possible. By becoming more aware of the potential problems in this arena, organizations might help to ensure that all job candidates are rated impartially and are being judged on job-related aspects. Finally, greater awareness of this problem can help organizations avoid costly litigation due to their unfair hiring practices.
Chapter 2
BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Interview Structure

An extensively researched mechanism for controlling for interview bias is the structure of the job interview. Interviews can either be conducted in a structured or an unstructured method. Campion, Palmer, and Campion (1997) defined structure as “any enhancement of the interview that is intended to increase psychometric properties by increasing standardization or otherwise assisting the interviewer in determining what questions to ask or how to evaluate responses” (p. 656). More specifically, structured interviews aim to improve the content of the interview and the evaluation process. By doing so, the overall psychometric properties of reliability and validity are raised.

Structuring an interview allows for greater predictive success in choosing job candidates. The process of structuring an interview involves creating a specific set of pre-ordered questions along with a certain systemic method of scoring these questions. In addition, structured interviews do not allow job candidates to interrupt the interview except for clarification purposes. Candidates are only allowed to ask questions after the interview so that the actual interview process is not redirected in a different way than what was planned. This process is very different from the unstructured interview, which involves a less methodical way of scoring interview responses and structuring specific questions. Unstructured interviews also allow candidates more freedom to interact with the interviewer throughout the interview process. While this may seem favorable to both
candidates and interviewers because of the casual, interpersonal nature of unstructured interviews, the benefits of the structured interview are imperative to organizations. Unstructured interviews may allow for a variety of biases to occur due to self-rating errors. Less structure in an interview may cause more rating errors, such as assumed similarity or the halo effect (Blackman, 2002). These rating errors may select for individuals less suited for the job, simply because the interviewer feels more of a social bond with the job candidate.

Structured interviews are generally considered beneficial over the unstructured or loosely based interview methods at least in terms of their predictive capability. Structured interviews have been found to be more successful in selecting more suited employees, result in better employee performance, and enhance organizational profitability. However, across organizations, structured interviews are less preferred than unstructured interviews (Van Der See & Bakker, 2002). Some reasons why structured interviews are underutilized include: being monotonous, reducing the ability to recruit by seeming cold and indifferent, and structured interviews being incongruent with organizational values (Van Der See & Bakker, 2002).

In a study by Champion, Pursell, and Brown (1988), the psychometric properties of the structured interview were explored. The study involved utilizing the structured interview process on entry-level production employees \((n = 149)\). According to this study, the structured interview allows for higher psychometric properties over the unstructured interview, including higher interrater reliability \((r = .88)\) and predictive validity \((\text{uncorrected } r = .34, \text{ corrected } r = .56)\). The structured interview was comparable
in validity to a battery of typical written employment tests. The authors also found that the structured interview had a strong cognitive aptitude component, which makes it a very powerful selection tool.

Since the job interview can be such a subjective and individualized method of selection, having a more structured interview normally helps organizations by reducing bias in the hiring process. Structured interviewing helps to relieve or moderate biases that may exist among interviewers, since questions are less open-ended and require specific information, as compared to the unstructured interview. In addition, unstructured interviews can increase the likelihood that nonverbal behaviors like physical appearance will affect perceptions of the candidate (Chapman & Rowe, 2001).

The use of the unstructured interview is rampant across organizations. In a study by Van Der See and Bakker (2002), the preference of unstructured interviews was examined by adopting the theory of planned behavior. Managers \( n = 79 \) received descriptions of an unstructured and a structured interview samples. Results indicated that unstructured interviews were favored among managers when compared to the structured interview style.

According to the authors, both employees and employers feel that the loosely based conversational qualities of the unstructured interview are more favorable when compared to the more rigid, job-specific, and straightforward aspects of the structured interview. However, it is these qualities that make the less preferred structured interview a more reliable selection method. Not only are psychometric properties higher for structured interviews, it has been suggested that structured interviews may be less prone
to biases that could have an impact on applicant selection decisions (Campion et al., 1997). Various studies have shown the effectiveness of structured interviews moderating potential biases, including gender, race, and pregnancy of job candidates. Structured interviews assist in making employee selections based on job related content and not other extraneous variables. Since unstructured interviews are preferred by both employers and job candidates, it makes sense to think that overall more positive feelings toward unstructured interviews would “leak” into candidate ratings, resulting in more favorable candidate ratings when compared to the ratings from the less favored structured interview. Additionally, since job candidates may be more at ease during a casual unstructured interview, they may provide higher quality answers to interview questions. Finally, since interviewers are also more at ease, they may provide more lenient ratings of candidate responses.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

\[ H_1: \text{There will be a main effect of structure on favorability ratings. Participants provided with an unstructured interview will rate applicants more favorably than participants provided with a structured interview.} \]

**Interview Structure and Applicant Attractiveness**

An obsession with attractiveness is something that is not unique to western society; it is exhibited throughout the world and a through a vast array of cultures (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002). A standard definition of attractiveness is difficult to obtain, since the idea of what is attractive can vary from culture to culture. However, a general definition of attractiveness has been described as a common aesthetic/affective judgment
for faces of both sexes (Rhodes, 2006). Some evolutionary psychologists believe that attractiveness can be traced back to psychological adaptations and mate preference (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002). These adaptations are biological in nature and focus on specific assessments of mates which include: symmetry of the face, and preference for average, or common traits (Rhodes, 2006). Another adaption for mate preference includes the assessment of sexual dimorphism, which refers to the physical differences between males and females (Rhodes, 2006). Whatever the specific definition or criteria for attractiveness may be, it is still a very predominant concern of our society. The judging of individuals based on their level of attractiveness may affect a variety of social and professional situations.

The effect of applicant attractiveness on the selection process is a potentially significant issue in employee selection. Ideally, attractiveness would not be an issue in an interviewing situation, and only qualifications and ability to perform duties should be evaluated. However, often times the attractiveness of an applicant can affect the overall hiring decision. In a study by Desrumaux, De Bosscher, and Léoni (2009), recruiters (n = 40) rated the hireability, utility, and desirability of eight applicants based on their resumes, competence test scores, and job descriptions for the positions they were applying to. The results indicated that attractive applicants received higher hireability ratings than unattractive applicants, and attractive men were rated the most favored among all of the candidates.

Regardless of the attractiveness of the candidate, one might assume that the most qualified candidates would receive a job offer; however, this is not always the case. In a
study by Dipboye, Fromkin and Wiback (1975), professional interviewers \((n = 30)\) and college students \((n = 30)\) rated bogus resumes on their suitability for a managerial position. The applicants and resumes varied in applicant gender, physical attractiveness, and level of education. Both students and professional interviews rated males higher than females, attractive applicants higher than unattractive applicants, and more educated individuals over less educated individuals.

In a similar study by Watkins and Johnston (2000), the relationship between applicant physical attractiveness and resume quality was explored in reference to the evaluation of job applicants during the selection process. Participants \((n = 180)\) were asked to rate resumes that differed among their quality, for a trainee position. Some resumes had female photos attached, which were previously rated as being either attractive or average in a pilot study, while others had no photos included. The participants then rated the applicant based on whether they thought the applicant was qualified for the job. In the high quality resume range, there was no preference given to attractive candidates. However, in the mid-range quality resume there was preference shown to the attractive candidates over the unattractive candidates.

These studies illustrate that under certain conditions, the attractiveness of a candidate can affect the overall hiring decision. If applicants are perceived as being more attractive than another candidate, there is a chance that the attractive applicant will be rated more favorably for a job than the unattractive candidate.
Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H$_2$: There will be a main effect of attractiveness on favorability ratings.

Participants provided with an attractive applicant will rate the applicants more favorably than those that are provided with an unattractive applicant.

**Gender of the Rater**

Some studies have suggested that there are differences between applicant ratings, given the gender of the interviewer. In a study by Raza and Carpenter (1987), eight interviewers conducted 171 interviews in which applicants were rated, and an overall hiring decision was made. Overall, it was found that female interviewers rated applicants higher on their interview performance than their male counterparts. Another study by Spencer and Drass (1989) found that female interviewers were less likely to interrupt or structure a conversation than male interviewers. This study utilized 47 undergraduate students who participated in a simulated interview in which they had to explain to another study participant acting as an interviewer, why they should receive an academic award at their university. The study found that during the interview process, female interviewers were less likely to interrupt interviewees to gain conversational power. If an applicant is interrupted too often during an interview, he or she may not be able to provide all of the information necessary to receive a positive rating from the interviewer.

In a study by Christensen and Rosenthal (1982), 10 male and female participants served as interviewers who rated 90 male and female interviewees. The raters asked the participants a series of questions regarding their social life, school background, family background, and personal interests. Based on the interviewees’ responses, the interviewer
rated them based on likeability and other personality related traits. Overall, the study found that male interviewers showed more biased behavior compared to female interviewers.

Together these studies indicate that it is likely that a male interviewer will provide less favorable ratings across all job applicants. Conversely, a female interviewer would provide more favorable ratings across all types of job applicants (both attractive and not attractive).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: There will be a main effect of rater gender on applicant ratings. Male raters will rate candidates overall less favorably than female raters.

A study by Chapman and Rowe (2001) attempted to examine if videoconferencing technology, interview structure, and gender of interviewer affected interviewers’ perceptions of candidate. This study utilized 92 real-world job applicants that were chosen to be interviewed either face-to-face, or through a teleconferencing method. The authors found that female raters rated candidates consistently higher than male raters (across interview structures). Female interviewers also rated candidates higher in unstructured interviews than in structured interviews. Male interviewers showed slightly higher ratings in unstructured interviews compared to structured interviews, though the magnitude of this difference was not as large as it was for female interviewers. Therefore, when structure of the interview is considered, unstructured interviews will provide the most favorable ratings by both males and females. Within unstructured
interviews, female raters will give the highest ratings to candidates. The lowest ratings will exist with structured interviews and male raters.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: There will be an interaction between structure and rater gender. Females rating unstructured interviews will provide the most favorable ratings. Males rating structured interviews will provide the least favorable ratings.

**Gender of the Rater and Candidate Attractiveness**

A variety of studies have postulated that males will give preference to attractive members of the opposite sex. In a study by Cunningham and Russell (2004), 143 participants completed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory and rated the importance of several partner characteristics. According to Cunningham and Russell (2004), men attached greater importance to physical attractiveness in a partner than women did. Men seemed to put greater importance on attractiveness due to evolved mate selection strategies. According to evolutionary psychologists, men have inherited mating mechanisms to help ensure reproductive success (Cunningham & Russell, 2004). Reproductive success relied mostly on ensuring that their mate was fertile, as “[i]ndicated by physical characteristics of youth and health such as facial attractiveness, a particular waist-to-hip ratio, smooth skin, body and facial feature symmetry” (Cunningham & Russell, 2004). Ensuring that their mate was fertile, youthful, and healthy ensured that their offspring would have a greater chance of survival.

This type of mate selection strategy that males have inherited not only affects their judgment in sexual conquests, but in daily interactions as well. Overall, studies have
suggested that men favor attractive women more than their unattractive counterparts (Fink & Penton-Voak, 2002). It would be fair to suggest then, in interviewing situations that men would rate attractive female candidates more favorably than unattractive female candidates.

Conversely, females have been shown to have very different inherited mating strategies than men. Instead of placing favor toward youthful and fertile mates, females put more importance on obtaining a mate that can provide for both her and their offspring (Cunningham & Russell, 2004). Women therefore, do not have such an overwhelming preference for attractive mates as compare to men. Based on this, it could be postulated that women would not show a large amount of bias toward unattractive individuals in interpersonal interactions.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₅: There will be an interaction between rater gender and candidate attractiveness. Male raters will rate attractive candidates more favorably than female raters. Female raters will not show a preference to either type of candidate.

**Exploratory Analysis: Interview Structure, Rater Gender, and Candidate Attractiveness**

Interviews are a widely used method for job selection. The interview process is preferred over other selection methods by both employers and job candidates (Van Der See & Bakker, 2002). It has been suggested in preceding sections that the variables of interview structure, rater gender, and candidate attractiveness all affect the interview process in some way. Consequently, when combined, these variables should have a
considerable amount of interaction between each other since they are all influential factors during an interview. This interaction should vary in strength based on the combination of the levels of the variables.

Since these variables have not been studied in combination before, there is no direct empirical evidence to draw on for developing a hypothesis. However, based on previously cited literature and the associated hypotheses, it seems logical to propose the following hypothesis:

H6: There will be a three-way interaction between interview structure, rater gender, and candidate attractiveness. The most favorable ratings will exist in the condition of unstructured interviews with female raters, and both attractive and unattractive candidates. Other high ratings will exist with unstructured interviews, male raters, and attractive candidates. Moderate favorability ratings will exist with structured interviews, male raters, and attractive candidates. Finally, the lowest candidate favorability ratings will exist with structured interviews, male raters, and unattractive candidates.
Chapter 3

METHOD

Participants

One hundred and forty-two undergraduate students from the human subjects pool at California State University, Sacramento participated in this study. Of the total number of participants, 70 were male and 72 were female. Participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 48 ($M = 20.36$, $SD = 3.80$), and 90.1% of participants reported that they had worked (for pay) while 9.9% had not. In terms of ethnic background, 42.3% of the participants identified as white, 24.6% as Asian, 11.3% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 9.9% were African American, 1.4% as Pacific Islander, 0.7% identified as Alaskan or Native American, and 9.9% as Other. The participants were given an hour of research credit for their participation in the study.

Materials

In this 2 X 2 X 2 between-subjects design, each participant was given resumes of a fictional job candidate (Appendix A). The resume of the fictional job candidate depicted a high school graduate attending junior college with some retail experience. Participants were also given a brief job description (Appendix B) for a customer service position at a department store. Additionally, participants were provided with one of the two vignettes (Appendix C) that manipulated the variable of interview structure. These vignettes described a fictional individual depicted in the resume who applied for a position opening in the job description and received a job interview. Without using
specific terminology, one vignette described a situation where the fictional job applicant was given a structured interview, and other described an unstructured interview. Participants were also given one of two interview transcripts that served as further manipulation of interview structure (Appendix D) and provided information about the fictional job applicant that participants could use as a basis for rating. In addition to the interview transcripts, participants were exposed to one of two black and white photographs of the fictional job applicant. These photographs manipulated the variable of applicant attractiveness, with one picture illustrating a highly attractive applicant, and the other picture illustrating an unattractive candidate. These distinctions between attractive and unattractive photographs were made on the basis of feature facial symmetry, petite features, and the appearance of an even skin tone, as supported by the research in evolutionary psychology.

Differences in levels of attractiveness were created by taking one photograph of a consenting individual and manipulating it using Adobe Photoshop CS4 software. For piloting purposes, two attractive and two unattractive photographs were created for the study (Appendix E). The two attractive photographs included the original photograph untouched, along with a slightly retouched version to reduce the size of facial features and create more facial symmetry. Two unattractive photographs were created by skewing the symmetry of the face and creating an uneven, blemished skin tone.

Lastly, participants were provided with a candidate favorability survey. The survey asked participants to rate their favorability toward selecting the fictional job applicant for the position based on the information that was presented. The survey
specifically contained questions regarding the qualifications of the candidate, the level of competency based on how they answered their interview questions, and the overall favorability of the candidate for the job.

The candidate favorability measure was created by combining two previously published, validated measures. Overall, the scale used in this study contained nine total test items; three items came from a measure in a study by Chapman and Rowe (2001), and six items came from a measure by Cohen and Bunker (1975). The three-item measure by Chapman and Rowe (2001) had a Cronbach's alpha of .77 and originally utilized a seven-point scale (where 1 = poor and 7 = excellent). These items assessed the overall impression of the job candidate, the appropriateness of the applicant's educational background for the job, and the applicant's previous work experience. The Cronbach's alpha was not reported by the authors of the six-item measure; however, information was provided for the convergent validity of the measure, showing a multiple $R$ for these questions of .54. Further validation evidence was not provided. The measure utilized a five-point scale (where 1 = a very unfavorable evaluation and 5 = a very favorable evaluation). These items assessed the candidate's ability to express ideas, the quality of the candidate's work record, whether the candidate demonstrated initiative, the candidate's interest in working for the organization, the candidate's job-related experience and training, and the level of knowledge that the candidate had for the job they were applying for.

For the combined measure utilized in this study, a five-point scale was utilized which was very similar to the one in the Cohen and Bunker measure (where 1 = Very
Poor Evaluation, 2 = Not Satisfactory, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, and 5 = Excellent Evaluation. A reliability analysis was performed on the combined measure which produced a Cronbach's alpha of .96.

**Pilot Testing of Photographs**

Before the experiment was carried out, pilot studies were conducted to establish which photos were to be used for the study. The overall purpose was to obtain two photos, one of which captured a highly attractive female and another portrayed an unattractive female. Photographs only contained female job candidates in an attempt to control for other potential extraneous factors (differences in ratings of attractiveness for males vs. females). The four photos (two potentially attractive, and two potentially unattractive) as described in the materials section, were given to the participants and they were asked to rate each photo based on the individual’s level of attractiveness. The survey consisted of the participant rating the individual in the photo on a five-point scale of attractiveness (1= very unattractive, 5= very attractive) (Rubenstein, 2005). Appendix G presents the pilot survey given to the participants for the piloting of the candidate photos. Based on the information collected in this survey, the most attractive photograph \((M = 4.52)\) and the most unattractive photograph \((M = 1.78)\) was selected. These photographs are displayed in Appendix E as Photograph #1 (attractive) and Photograph #4 (unattractive).

**Pilot Testing of Vignettes and Interview Transcripts**

Pilot testing was also conducted to determine if the vignettes and interview transcripts used in the study were perceived as representative of structured and
unstructured interviews. Participants were given a description of the definitions of structured and unstructured interviews and both sets of the structured and unstructured vignettes and interview transcripts. They were then asked to rate whether they believed the two sets of vignettes and transcripts represented structured and unstructured interviewing. Appendix H presents the pilot survey given to the participants for the piloting of the vignettes, and Appendix I presents the pilot survey given for the interview transcripts. Based on the information provided by the participants, the vignettes and interview transcripts were slightly modified in order to become clearer for future participants. After minor modifications, structured \((M = 4.50)\) and unstructured \((M = 1.78)\) vignettes as well as structured \((M = 4.07)\) and unstructured \((M = 1.93)\) interview transcripts were finalized.

**Procedure**

Since gender of the rater was a variable being explored, the number of male and female participants that were needed was determined before conducting the experiment. Upon arrival to the test site, participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight possible conditions. Although the participants were assigned to the conditions randomly, the investigator ensured that both males and females were evenly distributed among the eight conditions.

Once seated, the participant was given a consent form to read and sign. Once the form was signed, instructions for the participants were read aloud. The participant was given a packet which included a job description, resume with applicant photo attached, a vignette, and an interview transcript. All applicants were portrayed with the same resume
across all of the eight conditions. The applicant photo and interview transcript with vignette given to the participants varied based on which condition they were assigned to. Once the participant reviewed all the information in their packet, they were asked to complete the candidate favorability survey.

Once the surveys were completed, the investigator collected them and debriefed the participant. A debriefing form was distributed that also gave information on the overall purpose of the study. The form also included contact information of the investigator in case the participant had questions about the study or the final results.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Tests of Hypotheses

A three-way analysis of variance procedure (ANOVA) was performed to analyze the hypotheses of this 2 X 2 X 2 between-subjects study. The independent variables included level of interview structure (structured and unstructured), candidate attractiveness (attractive and unattractive), and gender of the participant (male and female). The dependent variable was participant ratings of overall candidate favorability. The results of the study are separated according to each hypothesis. They are presented in the following section in the order of each hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis was that there would be a main effect of structure on favorability ratings such that participants provided with an unstructured interview would rate applicants more favorably than participants provided with a structured interview. The results of the ANOVA test for the structure main effect was statistically significant, $F(1, 134) = 7.67, p < .05$, indicating that the structured ($M = 3.13, SD = .99$) and unstructured interview groups ($M = 3.50, SD = 1.04$) differed in their favorability ratings (ANOVA results Table 1). The calculation of effect size produced an eta-squared of .03, indicating that 3% of the variance in the difference between the favorability ratings was accounted for by the level of structure. Hypothesis 1 was supported.
Table 1

ANOVA of Interview Structure and Attractiveness on Favorability Ratings

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<td>4.12</td>
<td>7.67*</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractiveness</td>
<td>67.47</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>67.47</td>
<td>125.60*</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERROR</td>
<td>71.98</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>153.40</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis was that there would be a main effect of attractiveness on favorability ratings such that participants provided with an attractive applicant photo would rate the applicant more favorably than those that are provided with an unattractive applicant photo. The results of the ANOVA test for the attractiveness main effect was also statistically significant, $F(1, 134) = 125.60, p < .05$, indicating that the attractive ($M = 4.02, SD = .72$) and unattractive groups ($M = 2.61, SD = .81$) differed in their favorability ratings (ANOVA results presented in Table 1). The calculation of effect size produced an eta-squared of .45, indicating that 45% of the variance in the difference between the favorability ratings was accounted for by level of attractiveness of the candidate photo. Hypothesis 2 was supported.
Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis was that there would be a main effect of rater gender on applicant ratings such that male raters would rate participants overall less favorably than female raters. The results of the ANOVA test for the gender main effect on favorability ratings did not achieve significance, $F(1, 134) = 2.59, p > .05$. Therefore, there was no significant difference between males and females when providing applicant favorability ratings. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4

The fourth hypothesis was that there would be an interaction between structure and rater gender such that females rating unstructured interviews would provide the most favorable ratings, and that males rating structured interviews would provide the least favorable ratings. The results of the ANOVA procedure for the interaction of structure and rater gender on favorability ratings did not achieve significance, $F(1, 134) =1.48, p > .05$. Therefore there was not an interaction between structure and rater gender on favorability ratings. Females rating unstructured interviews and males rating structured interviews were not significantly different than other groups. Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

Hypothesis 5

The fifth hypothesis was that there would be an interaction between rater gender and candidate attractiveness such that male raters would rate attractive candidates more favorably than female raters and that female raters would not show a preference to either type of candidate. The results of the ANOVA procedure for the interaction of rater
gender and candidate attractiveness on favorability ratings did not achieve significance, 

\[ F(1, 134) = .455, p > .05. \]

Therefore there was not an interaction between rater gender and candidate attractiveness on favorability ratings. Compared to all other possible group means, male participants rating attractive candidates was not significantly different than other groups. Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

**Hypothesis 6**

The sixth hypothesis was that there would be a three-way interaction between interview structure, rater gender, and candidate attractiveness. This interaction was hypothesized to have the most favorable ratings in the condition of unstructured interviews with female raters, and both attractive and unattractive candidates. Other high ratings were hypothesized to exist with unstructured interviews, male raters, and attractive candidates. Moderate favorability ratings were hypothesized to exist with structured interviews, male raters, and attractive candidates. Finally, the lowest candidate favorability ratings were hypothesized to exist with structured interviews, male raters, and unattractive candidates. The results of the ANOVA procedure for the three-way interaction of interview structure, rater gender, and candidate attractiveness on favorability ratings did not achieve significance, \( F(1, 134) = .05, p > .05. \) Hypothesis 6 was not supported.
This study examined the effects of interview structure (structured and unstructured), candidate attractiveness (attractive and unattractive), and rater gender on candidate favorability ratings. Results supported two of the main effect hypotheses. First, results confirmed that interview structure does have an effect on candidate favorability such that unstructured interviews result in greater favorability. This finding has been documented in other research studies, and is further validated here. Since unstructured interviews are less formal and pre-planned than structured interviews, they allow for less standardization, thus allowing other non-job related aspects of the candidate to become salient. For interviews to be less biased and more job related, organizations should focus on utilizing structured interviews. Even though job candidates may be perceived as more favorable in unstructured interviews, they may not necessarily be the best fit for the job.

Additionally, the results confirmed that attractive candidates are generally rated higher compared to their equally qualified unattractive counterparts. Attractiveness, or beauty, is a coveted concept that affects numerous societies and cultures, and is definitely not unique to western cultures. Judging individuals based on their level of attractiveness can occur in a variety of situations, including job-related areas. In this study, the effect of candidate attractiveness was very strong with 45% of the variance accounted for. This concern may have been elevated even more strongly in this study since the sample consisted of mostly young individuals ($M = 20.36, SD = 3.80$) who may be more
concerned with attractiveness since they are at the stage of their lives when they are seeking a romantic partner.

The results of this study confirm that the selection process specifically can be affected by candidate attractiveness. Ideally, only qualifications and ability to perform job duties should be of concern during an interview process; however, it appears that extraneous factors such as a candidate’s appearance can affect overall applicant ratings. Organizations need to become aware of this issue, and possibly provide training to interviewers in sound interviewing practices. If organizations are aware of these possible interviewer biases, then they can work to ensure that their interviewing processes are not affected by it, possibly by ensuring that only strongly validated structured interviews and interview rating systems are utilized in the hiring process. Additionally, organizations may find it helpful to conduct panel interviews with multiple interviewers. This may allow for individual interviewer bias against an applicant's appearance to become less dominant.

Lastly, hypotheses involving gender were found to be unsupported. This may have been an issue since past research in this area was mostly conducted in the 1980s and may not be applicable to this current generation. The participant pool was comprised of mostly younger individuals ($M = 20.36, SD = 3.80$) who may be more progressive or carry less biased views of gender differences compared to older generations.

However, given potential generational differences it is likely that there are still older individuals in the workforce who may rate candidates more harshly or favorably based on their gender and the candidates' gender. The results found in this study are
specific to the conditions of the study. Applying this study in a field setting may generate different results toward gender biases. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to ensure that the results found in this study are applicable to real-world settings. Organizations still need to be cognizant of this issue and focus on maintaining sound interviewing procedures by ensuring that interviewers are well trained in interviewing practices and remain consistent across applicant interviews.

**Limitations and Strengths**

**Limitations**

There were certain limitations of the study that existed. First of all, there are issues with the external validity of the study. The study took place in a laboratory setting, which is low in generalizability to other settings. Even though two of the main effects were found to be significant, this may not be the case in an actual field setting. Further, hypotheses that were found to be insignificant in the laboratory setting may very well be significant in a field setting.

Additionally, the participant pool utilized for the study was a limitation. Since the participants were from a human subjects pool at a University, the mean age of the participants was very low, around 20 years old. This age is not representative of the age of employees in organizations, specifically employees that are in a position to interview and rate job candidates. This issue may account for the reason why there was such a strong level of significance toward both male and female participants rating unattractive candidates more harshly than attractive candidates. Younger individuals may be more
concerned or aware of a person's appearance, which is why this effect may have been so pronounced in the study.

Another limitation of the study was the vignettes and interview transcripts that were used as materials. These vignettes and interview transcripts were specifically developed for this study by the researcher, and have not been previously validated by other studies. In an ideal situation (where the budget for the study was expanded), actual taped interviews would be utilized instead of an interview transcript. There are too many personal interpretations than could potentially occur with printed material. Using a video of actual interviews would be a more ideal method to convey the manipulation of interview structure.

Additionally, there may have been issues with the unstructured interview transcript. In an attempt to convey a more unstructured tone, the length of the interview, as well as the affective tone varied in the unstructured interview when compared to the structured interview transcript. This may pose a threat to internal validity, and should be addressed in future research. While these vignettes and interview transcripts were piloted prior to their use, it is recommended that a further validation study is conducted to support their use in future research.

**Strengths**

Despite the limitations, this study did have its strengths. Since this study was conducted in a standardized laboratory setting, there was a high degree of experimental control. This control helped to ensure that significant results were due to the independent variables in question, and not to other extraneous factors. Additionally, this study further
confirmed that job candidates' attractiveness is a factor that affects the favorability level an interviewer may have toward a job candidate. This opens up the door for future research in this particular area to determine if there are other significant factors that may interact with job candidate attractiveness in interview settings.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Future research in this area should be focus on improving the limitations of the study. First of all, future studies should be conducted in a field setting which would allow for greater external validity. Investigating the study's hypotheses in an actual organization would be helpful since the raters of the job candidates would be individuals who actually have experience and knowledge of job interviews and rating potential candidates. Due to the nature of the study, it may be advisable to conduct mock interviews with current employees rather than utilizing actual job candidates (which would change the conditions of the interview and may potentially jeopardize the candidates' chance of obtaining the job).

Conducting future research in a field setting would also ensure that a wider range of ages are included in the participant pool. This would allow for a more representative sample of the workforce, and would add to the validity of the study. Additionally, a field study may help to further demonstrate whether gender has a significant role in candidate favorability ratings. Utilizing an actual organization may yield different results than what was found in the laboratory setting in regard to the gender of the interviewer and the job candidate. In fact, further research in a field setting should also be conducted to ensure that significant hypotheses can be replicated in real-world settings.
Lastly, an interesting variable to further examine along with the other variables in this study would be the weight of the job candidate. One would assume that if candidates are rated more favorably based on their facial characteristics, than the same would occur for the appearance of their body. In a study by Kutcher and Bragger (2004), an examination of whether overweight job candidates would be evaluated as less qualified as their normal weight counterparts was conducted. In addition to the variable of candidate weight, it would be interesting to determine if both interview structure and gender of the rater would have any impact on the rating of an obese or overweight job candidate.

Since obesity is a growing concern in our society, it would be interesting to further validate the claim that overweight or obese job candidates may be rated lower compared to equally qualified normal weight candidates and determine if it interacts negatively with any other factors tested in this study. This would be an important issue for organizations to become aware of since they may be dealing with more potential job candidates that are overweight or obese.
APPENDIX A

Fictional Resume

SARAH DOE

OBJECTIVE
To gain valuable experience in my career field and learn new skills.

EXPERIENCE
2008–Present  Arbor Shoe  Sacramento, CA
Customer Service Assistant
• Assist with opening or closing down the store
• Assisting customers
• Training new employees

2006–2008  Jacob’s Department Store  Sacramento, CA
Customer Service Assistant
• Assisting customers
• Stocking product
• Helping other employees with their duties

EDUCATION
2009–Present  River’s Edge Community College  Sacramento, CA
Associate’s Degree, Planning to transfer to 4-year college.

2005–2009  Fairbanks High School  Sacramento, CA
• High School Diploma
APPENDIX B

Job Description

Kindle Department Store

Position Available: Customer Associate

Description of Position: The position of customer associate requires the employee to assist customers, complete customer transactions, and provide direct supervision of customer service representatives. Customer associates may be given closing or opening privileges, and are often required to train new employees.

Qualifications Needed:
- 1 year customer service or retail experience
- 6 months cash register experience
- Have knowledge of the retail industry
- Be able to work in a fast paced environment
- Be able to stand for more than 2 hours at a time

Educational Requirements:
- High School Diploma, or equivalent
APPENDIX C

Vignettes

Vignette #1

Sarah has been applying for numerous jobs over the past month. She has submitted both applications and her resume to various companies. Last week Sarah received a call from Kindle Department Store inviting her for a job interview.

Sarah was given an overview of Kindle’s interview process which is considered a “structured” interview. She was informed that Kindle’s interview style is extremely formal and that she would be interviewed by a current supervisor. Sarah was told that she would be asked 5 questions from the Kindle interviewer. She was ensured that the questions are aimed at determining her overall qualifications for the job, and that all job candidates will be asked the same set of questions during their interview. If Sarah does not understand a specific question, the interviewer cannot give any clarification or examples. Sarah was informed that this is Kindle’s policy to help ensure the same interview format is provided to all Kindle’s job candidates.

Once Sarah arrived at the Kindle Department Store for her interview, she was shown to a room where the interviewer was waiting for her. As explained to Sarah, she was asked a specific set of 5 interview questions. Once the interview was completed, Sarah was informed that the answers she gave would be scored against a systematic, numerical scoring system that is the same for every job candidate. Sarah’s interview score and resume will then be evaluated against the other job candidates, and a job
decision will be made. Sarah was told she would hear back from the company in approximately a week.
Vignette #2

Sarah has been applying for numerous jobs over the past month. She has submitted both applications and her resume to various companies. Last week Sarah received a call from Kindle Department Store inviting her for a job interview.

Sarah was given an overview of Kindle’s interview process. She was informed that Kindle’s interview style was very informal, and that she would be interviewed by a current supervisor. Sarah was told that she would be asked about her educational and work experience background in a conversation format from the Kindle interviewer. She was informed that every interview is different, but the questions are aimed at determining her overall qualifications for the job. If Sarah does not understand a question from the interviewer, she will be given some clarifications or examples. Sarah was informed that it was Kindle’s policy to help ensure that all job candidates feel like they can showcase who they are during the interview process.

Once Sarah arrived at the Kindle Department for her interview, she was shown to a room where the interviewer was waiting for her. As explained to Sarah, she was asked various questions about her educational and work experience. Once the interview was completed, Sarah was informed that the answers she gave would be scored by the interviewer based on his/her personal reactions to how well she did in the interview. Sarah’s interview score and resume will then be evaluated against the other job candidates, and a job decision will be made. Sarah was told she would hear back from the company in approximately a week.
APPENDIX D

Interview Transcripts

Interview Transcript #1

Interviewer: Hello Sarah (shake hands). Today we are going to ask you a series of questions during this interview. Please try to not deviate from the questions asked, and answer them to the best of your ability. Do you have any questions?

Candidate: I don't think so.

Interviewer: Alright, let's begin. Tell us about a specific time where you provided excellent customer service and how you accomplished this.

Candidate: There was one specific time when a woman needed assistance finding a style of pants, and I ensured that her needs were being met. I did my best to find the type of pants that the woman was looking for, and even looked in the back to see if we had something in stock. When I could locate the pants, I asked another employee if they had any suggestions for the customer.

Interviewer: Explain to us your biggest accomplishment while working in the retail industry.

Candidate: My biggest accomplishment in the retail industry is simply doing my best to excel in all of the workplaces I was a part of. In my last job, I was even given the extra responsibility of closing down and locking up the store at night, along with my manager.

Interviewer: Describe an experience in which you were required to effectively interact with a customer and respond to their needs.

Candidate: In all of the stores I worked at, I always interacted with the customers. I always ensured that I first greeted the customer and asked if they needed help. In one case, I was able to help a man decide on a birthday gift for his wife.

Interviewer: Tell me about the last time you solved a problem at work; what difficulties did you encounter, and how did you overcome them?
Candidate: At my last job, we had a problem with the display of some of our products, specifically the purses. I felt that the purses were not in a good position in the store, which explained why they were not selling as well as they should have. I gave my suggestion to the manager, which eventually led to the purses being moved to a more optimal location. Because of this, the purses did have a higher rate of sale. The main difficulty I had with this problem was overcoming the fear of giving my manager the suggestion I had for the purses. I overcame this by telling myself that my idea was good and could help the store.

Interviewer: Describe a situation in which you took on the role of a team player. What was the situation, what did you do, and what happened as a result?

Candidate: At a store that I worked at, there were two employees that both had extremely long lines of customers. I was busy re-stocking product, but took it upon myself to help out my fellow employees and open another cash register until the lines died down. Because of the help that I gave them, they were able to assist all of the customers without causing extremely long wait times.

Interviewer: Thank you, that concludes the interview. Do you have any questions?

Candidate: Not at the time. Thank you very much for your time.
Interview Transcript #2

Interviewer: Hi how are you doing today, Sarah?

Candidate: I'm doing well, thanks.

Interviewer: I hope you didn't have too much trouble finding the place. Some people have mentioned it's pretty difficult to find.

Candidate: No, I map-quested it—so it was pretty easy.

Interviewer: (laughs) That’s great. Well, today I'm going to ask you some questions about your work history and different experiences you have had. Let me know if you have any questions along the way.

Candidate: I definitely will, thank you.

Interviewer: Ok, can you explain to me your experience in providing excellent customer service?

Candidate: In all of the situations where I dealt with customers, I always ensured that their needs were being met.

Interviewer: How would you say you met your customer’s needs?

Candidate: There was one specific time when a woman needed assistance finding a style of pants, and I ensured that her needs were being met. I did my best to find the type of pants that the woman was looking for, and even looked in the back to see if we had something in stock. When I could locate the pants, I asked another employee if they had any suggestions for the customer.

Interviewer: Great, sounds like you’re really committed to customer service. Can you explain your accomplishments in the retail industry?

Candidate: I have worked at a variety of retail shops and did my best to excel in all of the workplaces I was a part of. My biggest accomplishment in the retail industry is simply doing my best to excel in all of the workplaces I was a part of. In my last job, I was even given the extra responsibility of closing down and locking up the store at night, along with my manager.

Interviewer: That’s very impressive. Can you tell me about your experience with customer interactions?
Candidate: In all of the stores I worked at, I always interacted with the customers. Whether it was just to greet them, or ensure they did not need any help.

Interviewer: That’s great, we really value that kind of attitude at our store. Can you give me a specific example?

Candidate: In one case, I was able to help a man decide on a birthday gift for his wife.

Interviewer: I would agree that can be a daunting task. (both laugh) What would you say is your biggest strength when interacting with customers?

Candidate: I always prided myself on being friendly and helpful to all of the customers I interacted with.

Interviewer: Again, a great skill to have. Now, I want you to explain to me about a time where you solved a problem at work.

Candidate: At my last job, we had a problem with the display of some of our products, specifically the purses. I felt that the purses were not in a good position in the store, which explained why they were not selling as well as they should have.

Interviewer: So what happened?

Candidate: I gave my suggestion to the manager, which eventually led to the purses being moved to a more optimal location. Because of this, the purses did have a higher rate of sale.

Interviewer: How did you come to the conclusion the purses were not in a good location?

Candidate: I felt that since we had moved them, we saw a rapid drop in sales. I felt if we were to put them near the other accessories, we would be able to make more sales.

Interviewer: Sounds like you really showed some initiative in that situation.

Candidate: Thanks, I always try my best in any situation.

Interviewer: Now, for the last question, can you tell us about a time when you exhibited team work?
Candidate: At a store that I worked at, there were two employees that both had extremely long lines of customers. I felt like I needed to help them out, so I took it upon myself to help out my fellow employees and open another cash register until the lines died down.

Interviewer: What were you working on when you noticed your other employees needed help?

Candidate: I was busy re-stocking product, but I felt that serving the customers was a more important issue to address. Because of the help that I gave them, they were able to assist all of the customers without causing extremely long wait times.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much for your time today Sarah. Unless you have any other questions, that's going to conclude the interview today.

Candidate: I don't think I have any questions as of now. Thanks for your time.
APPENDIX E

Applicant Photographs for Pilot Study

Photograph #1

Photograph #2
Photograph #3

[Image of Photograph #3]

Photograph #4

[Image of Photograph #4]
Candidate Favorability Scale

**Candidate Favorability**

**Directions:** The following survey asks you to assess the overall favorability of the job applicant you have reviewed. For each survey questions below please circle the number that corresponds with your choice, using the options below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Not Satisfactory</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Overall impression of the applicant based on written information

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2) Appropriateness of the applicant's educational background for the position

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3) Evaluation of the applicant's previous work experience

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4) Candidate’s ability to express ideas.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

5) Candidate’s quality of work record.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6) Candidate’s ability to demonstrate initiative.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

7) Candidate’s interest in working for the organization.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8) Candidate’s job-related experiences and training.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9) Candidate’s knowledge of the particular occupational area for which he/she applied.

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
APPENDIX G

Pilot Photo Attractiveness Scale

**Directions:** The following survey asks you to assess the overall attractiveness of the individuals presented in the photos provided to you. For each numbered photo, please circle the number that corresponds with your choice, using the options below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Unattractive</th>
<th>Unattractive</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Attractive</th>
<th>Very Attractive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Photo #1:**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**Photo #2:**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**Photo #3:**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

**Photo #4:**

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
APPENDIX H

Pilot Vignette Level of Structure Scale

Directions: The following survey asks you to assess the amount of structure in the interview described in the vignette you read.

Unstructured interviews are defined as informal, conversation-based interviews that are less controlled by the interviewer(s), and allow for the job applicant and interviewer to interact more freely. Questions are not asked in any specific order and are typically not planned out. These types of interviews are very informal and can feel like a conversation with a friend.

Structured interviews are more formal interviews that are more controlled by the interviewer(s). Questions are more standardized in a structured interview, and are asked in a specific order. In these types of interviews, the person being interviewed can feel restricted. For example, the person being interviewed may not be able to say everything they would want to at the time they would want. Everything is planned in a structured interview and the conversation is limited to answering the interview questions, there is not any friendly conversation.

For each numbered vignette, please circle the number that corresponds with your choice, using the options below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Unstructured</th>
<th>Unstructured</th>
<th>Neither Unstructured or Structured</th>
<th>Structured</th>
<th>Very Structured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Vignette #1:

1 2 3 4 5

Vignette #2:

1 2 3 4 5
APPENDIX I

Pilot Interview Transcript Level of Structure Scale

Directions: The following survey asks you to assess the amount of structure in the actual interview transcripts provided to you.

Unstructured interviews are defined as informal, conversation-based interviews that are less controlled by the interviewer(s), and allow for the job applicant and interviewer to interact more freely. Questions are not asked in any specific order and are typically not planned out. These types of interviews are very informal and can feel like a conversation with a friend.

Structured interviews are more formal interviews that are more controlled by the interviewer(s). Questions are more standardized in a structured interview, and are asked in a specific order. In these types of interviews, the person being interviewed can feel restricted. For example, the person being interviewed may not be able to say everything they would want to at the time they would want. Everything is planned in a structured interview and the conversation is limited to answering the interview questions, there is not any friendly conversation.

For each numbered interview transcript, please circle the number that corresponds with your choice, using the options below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very Unstructured</th>
<th>Unstructured</th>
<th>Neither Unstructured or Structured</th>
<th>Structured</th>
<th>Very Structured</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Transcript #1:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Interview Transcript #2:

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
REFERENCES


Spencer, J., & Drass, K. (1989). The transformation of gender into conversational

