

An Exploration of Gender Bias in Job Interviews

Abstract:

Gender bias in hiring processes remains a significant challenge despite efforts to promote workplace equality. My study investigates the perceptions of gender bias during job interviews, focusing on the experiences of women and men. Drawing on Status Characteristics Theory and Prove-It-Again! Bias, I hypothesize that women perceive lower levels of interviewer confidence in their capabilities to perform the job and encounter more pushback compared to men. Data from 83 participants reveal unexpected findings: women tend to perceive interviewers as more confident in their capabilities to perform the job; and women tend to perceive less pushback than men during interviews.

However, several limitations constrain the generalizability of these findings. The study's relatively small sample size and the overrepresentation of white respondents limit the broader applicability of the results. Moreover, environmental factors such as industry type and interviewer characteristics were not measured, potentially impacting interview dynamics. Future research should systematically analyze these factors to gain a more comprehensive understanding of gender bias in hiring processes. Despite these limitations, my study provides valuable insights into how gender might influence people's experiences during job interviews.

Introduction:

Although workplace discrimination has decreased, inequality persists. Women remain under-represented in top managerial jobs, including executive and CEO positions, and

occupational segregation continues to demarcate the U.S. labor market (England et al., 2020; Warner et al., 2018). Despite diversity at the highest job levels, including executive and CEO roles, correlating to better firm performance (Perryman et al., 2016), workforce integration of women and men has stagnated since the mid-1990s (Cohen, 2013; England et al., 2020). Many reasons exist why gender equality has stalled in the workplace. Scholars have focused on lackluster federal and state work-family policies, inequitable divisions of labor, "ideal worker norms" that disadvantage women, and workplace gender discrimination and biases, but one area that has received limited scholarly attention is how gender bias during key attainment processes such as the hiring process may contribute to these differences.

With large firms being the dominant employers in the United States bureaucracy is proposed as a solution to bias, with increased bureaucracy potentially leading to more equitable outcomes (Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006). However, there is still a large variance in bureaucratic policy effectiveness (Caleo & Heilman, 2019; Dobbin et al., 2015; Kalev et al., 2006; Baert et al., 2018). Even with the best intentions, policies can have unintended negative side effects for the group they intend to help (Caleo & Heilman, 2019), and gender biases can be built into formalized policies (Acker, 1990; Acker, 2006). Hardy III et al. (2022) found that even small amounts of bias during the hiring process can lead to large effects on the company's upper levels. These differences can lead to very different career outcomes for men and women, creating a "glass ceiling" (Purcell et al., 2010). There has been extensive research into gender bias (Cohen, 2013; England et al., 2020; Hardy III et al., 2022; Perryman et al., 2016), homophily processes in hiring (Compero & Kacperczyk, 2020; Engel et al., 2022; Ertug et al., 2022), and the experiences of women in the workforce (Frankforter, 1996; Orser & Leck, 2010; Purcell et al., 2010; Rivera & Owens, 2021; Saks & McCarthy, 2006). However, little of this research has

focused on the experiences and perceptions of women within the interview process. This inquiry has led me to investigate the following question: Are women or men more likely to perceive bias during their most recent interview?

Perception is key to understanding how individuals make choices on which jobs to keep, pursue further, or leave. Thus, perception is a key element to understanding the interview environment from those intending to fulfill open positions, despite not always aligning with the reality of the events.

Using survey data from a sample of eighty-three participants, I will compare women's and men's experiences during their last interview and determine if there are statistically significant differences between their perceptions. I have recruited individuals with a minimum of three years of professional experience who are at least eighteen years old and reside in the U.S. for the sample.

Additionally, I have developed two scales informed by Joan Williams' research on Prove-it-Again! Bias that will help understand respondents' experiences during the hiring process (Slaughter et al., 2014). The data that has been collected is utilized for a regression analysis examining the relationship between gender and respondents' experiences during the hiring process in two main areas: perceived level of interviewer confidence and perceived level of pushback. Understanding how gender impacts job seekers' experiences is important to more fully understand gender barriers that may continue to exist in the workplace and perpetuate the lack of gender integration at the top levels of business.

Empirical Foundations: Gender Inequality in the Workplace and Interviews

Gender diversity in employment – at all job levels – represents a significant signal of integration and equality within a larger society. The integration of women into male-dominated jobs is important because male-dominated jobs tend to be higher paying and offer opportunities for upward mobility, including leadership positions. Gender diversity also offers benefits to companies and the workers within them. For example, a study conducted by Perryman et al., (2013) found that top management teams characterized by greater diversity exhibited enhanced firm performance and reduced the risk of negative performance while also leading to progress in closing the wage gap between men and women at the top management level.

Despite the moral imperatives and advantages of gender integration and diversity at the executive level, there has been a noticeable slowdown in the progress toward further integration, as noted by Cohen (2013) and England et al. (2020). Persistent barriers hinder the full inclusion of women at the top levels of management and within male-dominated fields as a whole, with the interview process being a key attainment juncture in which gender biases can occur. For example, Hardy III and colleagues (2022) find that small amounts of bias within the hiring process can lead to large differences in organizational diversity. They explain that biases in the hiring process can erode the positive impact of well-planned efforts for diverse recruitment, and they pose challenges to achieving workplace diversity. To tackle this issue, one potential solution, they propose, is to adopt a zero-tolerance approach toward bias at any level within the hiring process.

Looking at hiring and bias within a larger statistical context, Koch et al. (2015) found that in male-dominated fields, men were given preferential treatment, but in female-dominated fields or integrated jobs, no preference was given to candidates based on gender. Yavorsky (2019) found that the barriers to entry were highest for women within male-dominated working-class

jobs, whereas men saw higher barriers to entry in both white and blue-collar female-dominated work. To further these mixed results, Galos and Coppock (2023) audited seventy employment audit experiments and found mixed results but, upon reanalysis, found that occupation plays a large role in the gendered outcomes. Occupations dominated by men and considered more prestigious were found to be less favorable to female applicants, increasing both income disparities among men and women, as Galos and Coppock (2023) found that women benefited in female, relatively lower-paying positions. Ultimately, the research indicates that gender parity can decrease gender bias in the hiring process.

One way that bias may present itself in interviews is through homophily. Homophily is the tendency for people to be attracted to others who are similar to them. In the entrepreneurial or startup environment, this presents a major issue for diversity as the team grows. Since men are more likely to start a business (Pines et al., 2010; Guzman & Kacperczyk, 2019), and male-led ventures are 63 percent more likely to receive funding for a venture than women-led ventures (Guzman & Kacperczyk, 2019), men are more likely to be at the head of a startup organization and be involved in the hiring process. Campero & Kacperczyk (2020) found that homophily exerts a strong effect on the supply side, the measure of those seeking jobs, in the startup labor market. This means that a lack of diversity in startups could not only make lack of diversity due to gender bias from employers more likely but also reduce the likelihood of diverse applicants applying to less diverse organizations. Men may also be in hiring roles within large companies, particularly in male-dominated firms. However, a larger organization may help reduce homophily processes since large firms tend to have human resources departments that may offer greater gender diversity in those conducting interviews. Specifically, women are over-represented in human resources positions, thus reducing the number of men interacting with

job seekers during the recruitment process, though this may only be true at initial hiring stages compared to later stages, where managers tend to conduct interviews. Taken together, understanding the impact of bias in the interview process becomes important at all stages of a business' life cycle and instrumental in the ongoing efforts to establish more equitable workforces, management teams, and successful organizations.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Experiences in the Interview Process

The workplace is a dynamic social construct where entrenched gender roles and expectations not only shape professional interactions but also significantly influence hiring processes, perpetuating gender disparities. Status Characteristics Theory offers a lens to delve deeper into the mechanisms driving gender inequalities within the context of hiring evaluations. Unlike homophily theories, which predominantly focus on individuals' preferences for those with similar characteristics (Ertug et al., 2022; Campero & Kacperczyk, 2020), Status Characteristics Theory provides a framework for understanding the complexities of gender-related inequalities in interviews (Berger et al., 1972; Rivera & Owens, 2021). Status Characteristics Theory's premise is rooted in the idea that when individuals come together to perform collective tasks, they often grapple with uncertainty regarding where to direct their attention and whose contributions should be valued more. Consequently, they seek cues in the environment that can serve as indicators of particular individuals' capabilities, particularly those associated with resource disparities.

Status beliefs further reinforce gender disparities by relying on cultural ideologies that portray men as inherently superior to women in the context of business operations and

management. Subsequently, gender emerges as a pervasive and influential factor when judging competence. The prevailing societal norm is the expectation for men to be more competent than women, creating more opportunities for them to demonstrate their competence, then, evaluating them more positively, perpetuating gender disparities across various domains (Berger et al., 1972; Rivera & Owens, 2021).

Status Characteristics Theory also introduces a notable distinction when compared to homophily theories. In essence, Status Characteristics Theory posits that, on average, both male and female evaluators should show a preference for members of the dominant group, which, in most contexts, refers to men. Empirical research substantiates this claim, indicating that male and female evaluators often assess men as more competent than their equally qualified female counterparts (Rivera & Owens, 2021; Galos et al., 2023).

Expanding on Status Characteristic Theory, Prove-It-Again! Bias (Slaughter et al., 2014) provides a helpful theoretical framework for forming expectations about women's experiences in interviews. Prove-It-Again! Bias discusses the issues that can hinder women's advancement at work and approaches to deal with them. The authors suggest that "women receive fewer opportunities than men do in the first place; they also suggest that even when they are given the chance to try, women's work product may well be held to higher standards than men's" (Slaughter et al., 2014, p. 24). They highlight how the criteria that are seen as important for a given role are whatever the male applicant has and that women need to achieve at a higher level to be perceived as equally competent.

The Prove-It-Again! bias framework also discusses employer gender differences in how they weigh the future potential of a worker versus current accomplishments. The authors argue that employers are more likely to promote or hire men based on their potential but hire and

promote women based on their achievements (Slaughter et al., 2014). These patterns may reveal the pervasive biases that impact women's career progression and their experiences in the hiring process. Women often find themselves navigating a landscape where their accomplishments weigh more heavily in evaluations while their male counterparts benefit from assumptions about their potential. Furthermore, women contend with bias that holds them to a stricter standard, not only in performance but also in their behavior compared to men.

Gender-specific scrutiny contributes to limited opportunities for women's career progression, perpetuating the concept of the "glass ceiling." The term "glass ceiling" encapsulates the barriers obstructing many women from ascending past certain career thresholds, regardless of their qualifications, and is rooted in multiple factors, including selection biases, cultural capital, homophily, networking dynamics, gender stereotypes, discriminatory practices, and occupational segregation (Purcell et al., 2010). The glass ceiling and Prove-it-Again! Bias can be used in combination to understand how differences in experiences due to bias in the hiring process may result in keeping women out of top leadership positions. Gender has been shown to be a significant moderating factor in career success outcomes, impacting elements such as total compensation, career ascension, and perceived success (Purcell et al., 2010). The literature unveils a two-fold phenomenon women face, represented as a "glass floor" preventing them from falling below a specific score threshold and a "glass ceiling," impeding the most competent female candidates from receiving the highest interview ratings (Rivera & Owens, 2021).

In regards to both hypotheses, this would indicate that male applicants will be favored and that women will be more likely to need to prove their abilities again during the interview process, receiving more pushback against their stated competencies and abilities. Accordingly, we expect:

Hypothesis 1: Women are more likely to perceive their interviewer(s) as less confident in their capabilities compared to men.

Hypothesis 2: Women encounter a higher degree of pushback from their interviewer(s) when compared to men during hiring evaluations.

Design and Methodology:

Survey Design

In this research, I adopted a survey-based study design. The survey consisted of five sections including a consent form. The other four sections consisted of qualification questions, priming questions related to their firm and interview, variable related questions about their experience and perception of the interview, and finally individual demographic questions at the end, totaling 25 questions.

To mitigate potential harm to respondents no identifying information was recorded, including names and IP addresses. While there was a small potential for harm in asking respondents to reflect upon a potentially negative interview experience, I believe that the benefits of conducting the study vastly outweighs any consequences. Additionally, resources were listed on reaching out to the UNC Charlotte IRB or myself in the case of any concerns. No respondents reached out at the time the study was completed.

Recruitment

Six respondents found the survey through LinkedIn and were not compensated for their participation, but remaining respondents were recruited via Prolific, a company that helps you garner recruitment for compensation. Respondents who were recruited via Prolific were paid \$1.00 for their participation. Prolific recruits a range of participants to take surveys and connects them with researchers through their online platform. Respondents fill out a survey prior to taking the survey that asks in depth questions about the surveys they can take part in. Survey takers are paid a flat rate determined by the researcher.

Sample

The study involved a diverse set of participants, including both men and women who had a minimum of three years of professional experience and have had their interview within the last year. The three-year experience threshold is considered essential to ensure that participants are well-versed in the norms of the workforce, and it allows for a meaningful comparison between their most recent interview experiences and those from the past to determine the amount of pushback and their perception of the interviewer's confidence. This criterion also ensured I recruited individuals who are more settled into their profession, rather than in temporary jobs, like those more common of younger or more junior workers (e.g., college students). The requirement for respondents to have had their interview in the last year ensures that there are less recall issues, with the goal that responses will be more accurate because respondents have greater memory of the events.

Ultimately, the final survey population consisted of 83 respondents; 44 respondents were male and 39 respondents were female. Fourteen of the 39 female respondents were people of

color, which included all races except for White and anyone of Hispanic ethnicity. In comparison, 10 of the 44 male respondents were people of color. The age of respondents ranged from 22 to 62 years, with a mean age of roughly 36 years. (See Table 1 for more details)

Interestingly, a higher percentage of women received and accepted job offers than did men, at forty-four percent and thirty-four percent, respectively. However men were more evenly distributed across the job offer spectrum with twenty-three percent who received offers but did not accept them compared to the fifteen percent of women in the same category. The proportion of respondents who did not receive an offer was roughly equal, with men composing forty-three percent of responses in this category and women composing forty-one percent..

Female respondents were also more evenly distributed across large and medium sized firms with forty-nine and forty-six percent, respectively. Male respondents, on the other hand, were sixty-one percent of respondents interviewing for large firms and only thirty percent interviewing with medium sized firms. Interviews with small firms only made up seven percent of total responses across gender.

Respondents spent an average of 288 seconds on the survey with 60 seconds being used as a minimum threshold to ensure thoughtful responses.

Table 1. Gender Breakdown of Descriptives (% of Gender Sample)

	Male (44)	Female (39)
Independent Variables (Mean)		
Percieved Interviewer Confidence	4.05	4.35
Amount of Pushback	2.42	1.78
Demographics		
Age (Mean)	35.93	37.51
Nonwhite	0.23	0.36
Interview Outcome		
Offer Received and Accepted	0.34	0.44
Offer Received but Rejected	0.23	0.15
No Offer	0.43	0.41
Does the Role Have Upward Mobility?		
Yes	0.68	0.72
No	0.32	0.28
Firm Size		
Large Firm (Over 250)	0.61	0.49
Medium Firm (21-250)	0.30	0.46
Small Firm (Less than 20)	0.09	0.05
Income (Annualized)		
Over \$100,000	0.32	0.18
\$75,000 to \$99,999	0.14	0.15
\$50,000 to \$74,999	0.18	0.28
\$25,000 to \$49,999	0.23	0.21
\$1,000 to \$24,999	0.11	0.15
Under \$1,000	0.02	0.03

N=83

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables under examination included the perceived levels of interviewer confidence and the likelihood of encountering pushback during the interview process.

The scale for the interviewee's perception of the amount of confidence the interviewer(s) has in their abilities to perform the job contains three questions. The questions ask the interviewee about their perception of how confident their interviewer(s) was in their ability to do the job, work well within the team, and contribute to the team's goals (Appendix 1). These questions all contain a five-point Likert scale from "not at all confident" to "completely confident." "Not at all confident" responses will be valued at zero, and the scale will go up to four for "completely confident" responses.

The scale for the likelihood of encountering pushback during the interview process contains three questions (Appendix 2). The questions ask if the interviewee experienced any overt or subtle pushback during the interview if their ability to succeed in the role was challenged by the interviewers, and how critical the interviewee felt the interviewer(s) were during the interview. These questions contain a five-point scale, with "1" representing the experience of no pushback and "5" representing a lot of pushback.

Independent Variable

Finally, gender was self-reported by the respondents. While I took responses encompassing a wide range of gender identities, I focused on the binary comparison of gender (with men being zero and women being one) for the analysis in comparing cis-men and

cis-women. Ultimately only one respondent was removed due to not falling into the categories we are investigating.

Analyses

To test my hypotheses, I used ordinary least squares regression models and ran all analyses in STATA version 18.0. Once downloaded from qualtrics, data were first cleaned in Excel which included removing incomplete responses and results that did not fit within the scope of our analyses, such as one participant who completed the survey but identified as a gender outside of man or woman. The scales were averaged and tested using an alpha test to ensure internal consistency, which produced alpha scores above .8 for both scales.

To test hypotheses 1 and 2, I first tested the main effect of gender for each of the respective dependent variables (H1: perceived levels of interviewer confidence; H2: the likelihood of encountering pushback during the interview process) in Model 1, and then again, net of controls in Model 2. The results of these analyses are shown below in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Ordinary least squares regression results of respondents' perception of their interviewers confidence in the respondent.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	(SE)	β	(SE)
Female	0.30+	(0.17)	0.35*	(0.16)
Outcome of Interview				
Offer received but rejected			-0.15	(0.26)
No offer received			-0.49**	(0.18)
Firm Size				
Medium Firm			-0.24	(0.18)
Small Firm			0.42	(0.38)
Role Upward Mobility			-0.37+	(0.19)
Non-White			-0.36*	(0.18)
Age			0.01	(0.01)

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Note. $N = 83$. The reference category for firm size is "large". The reference category for "Outcome of Interview" is "Offer received and accepted"

Table 3. Ordinary least squares regression results of respondents' perceived amount of challenge from their interviewers.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	(SE)	β	(SE)
Female	-0.65**	(0.21)	-0.68***	(0.20)
Outcome of Interview				
Offer received but rejected			-0.83**	(0.31)
No offer received			0.54*	(0.22)
Firm Size				
Medium Firm			0.41+	(0.22)
Small Firm			-1.07*	(0.46)
Role Upward Mobility			-0.16	(0.23)
Non-White			0.01	(0.22)
Age			-0.003	(0.01)

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note. $N = 83$. The reference category for firm size is "large". The reference category for "Outcome of Interview" is "Offer received and accepted"

Results

Perceived Level of Interviewer Confidence

Table 1 reveals a significant relationships between gender (Model 1: $b = 0.30$, $p < .10$; Model 2: $b = 0.35$, $p < .05$), race (Model 2: $b = -0.36$, $p < .05$), and interviews where the respondent did nor receive an offer (Model 2: $b = -0.49$, $p < .01$), in respondents' perceptions of their interviewer's confidence. Contrary to expectations, women respondents tended to perceive their interviewers as more confident in their abilities to perform the job . This would contradict my hypothesis for this variable. The absence of significance in firm size as a determinant of interviewer confidence may be attributed to the sample's skewed distribution towards larger firms. Moreover, the negative impact of race on respondents' perceptions of interviewer confidence, the negative impact of race on respondents' perceptions of interviewer confidence is in line with what status characteristics theory would suggest—that negative racial biases and stereotypes negatively influence the interview experiences of people of color.

Perceived Level of Pushback

Gender was found to be highly significant in regard to pushback (Model 1: $b = -0.65$, $p < .01$; Model 2: $b = -0.68$, $p < .001$) in Table 2, however again the effect is the opposite direction of what I would have expected given Status Characteristics Theory, with women reporting less conflict than men, net of controls. The outcome of the interview was significant, with receiving an offer being associated with less conflict during the interview ($b = -0.83$, $p < .01$), whereas no offer was associated with more conflict ($b = 0.54$, $p < .05$). Firm size was also significant at all levels with there being less pushback experienced at smaller firms ($b = -1.07$, $p < .05$) and more

at medium firms ($b = 0.41$, $p < .10$). Interestingly race and age were not significant in the amount of conflict perceived during the interview.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

In this section, I will provide potential explanations for the unexpected relationships found in the study regarding gender and respondents' perceptions of interviewer confidence, as well as the likelihood of encountering pushback. While the findings may seem contrary to established theories like Status Characteristics Theory and Prove-It-Again! Bias, they can be contextualized within the broader discourse on gender dynamics in the workplace.

One plausible explanation for the unexpected results lies in the differing expectations and experiences that men and women bring into job interviews. Previous research suggests that societal norms and gender stereotypes shape individuals' perceptions and behaviors in professional settings. Men, who historically have occupied positions of power and authority, may enter interviews with the expectation of minimal pushback or conflict due to their perceived entitlement or confidence stemming from societal privileges. And thus, if they experience any pushback they may remember it more than women or be especially sensitive to it. In contrast, women, who have often faced systemic barriers and stereotypes regarding their competence and suitability for leadership roles, may anticipate encountering some degree of resistance or skepticism during interviews. As a result, women may perceive relatively lower levels of interviewer confidence and higher levels of pushback compared to men, not because their interviews objectively fare better, but because their baseline expectations are different. However,

this framework would insinuate that people of color also should also expect more pushback and thus follow a similar correlation, but that is not supported by the results. People of color reported greater levels of conflict than their White counterparts and so, there must be a gender specific explanation for the results.

In light of the contradictory explanation above, it's essential to consider that gender bias in the hiring process may manifest differently depending on various contextual factors, such as industry norms, organizational culture, and individual characteristics of interviewers. In other words, the results may be driven by the fact that men's hiring context is different from women's hiring context, on average, and those unique contextual features are influencing men to report higher pushback in interviews. Factors such as the size and structure of the hiring firm, the composition of the interview panel, and how segregated the occupation is, and the specific job requirements may all influence the dynamics of the interview process and individuals' perceptions of bias. For example, because men tend to work in male-dominated contexts, they may encounter more male interviewers due to occupational segregation, which could lead to different experiences.

As interviewers, men may use more aggressive tactics or be more likely to openly challenge other men; whereas women interviewers might, by contrast, use more communal language or less direct ways of asking for information from a candidate (Lakoff, 1974). This difference in language in combination with occupational segregation could help explain the gaps left by the previous framework, that women are more likely to work in female-dominated industries and thus be interviewed by women, where interviews are less confrontational, and men may be more likely to work in male dominated industries and thus be interviewed by men, where interviews are more confrontational. Additionally, even when interviewing in male dominated

industries, societal norms may encourage men interviewing women to use less aggressive tactics with them than men creating upward pressure for women's reported experiences in both contexts (Jampol et. al, 2023).

Moreover, while the study focused on measuring respondents' perceptions of interviewer confidence and pushback, it's important to acknowledge that these perceptions may not always align perfectly with objective reality. Despite the importance of perception for how individuals choose to move through the interview process and make decisions about their careers, biases, stereotypes, and individual experiences can shape how individuals interpret and remember their interview interactions, leading to discrepancies between perceived and actual levels of bias. Therefore, future research could benefit from employing mixed-method approaches, combining survey data with qualitative interviews or observational studies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of interview dynamics and participants' experiences.

Ultimately, while the unexpected findings may appear to challenge conventional theories of gender bias in hiring processes, they highlight the need for continued research and dialogue to uncover the underlying mechanisms and address systemic inequalities in the workplace. By interrogating the complexities of gender dynamics in job interviews, organizations can work towards implementing more inclusive hiring practices and fostering environments where all individuals have equal opportunities for professional advancement, regardless of gender.

Limitations

Although there are many positives to my study, it is not without limitations. One primary limitation of my study is the relatively small sample size, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. With only 83 participants, who are not a representative sample, the study's results

may not accurately represent the broader workforce or capture the full range of experiences and perceptions in job interviews. A larger sample size would allow for more robust statistical analyses and enable researchers to draw more meaningful conclusions about gender dynamics in the hiring process. Additionally, my sample's demographic composition, particularly the overrepresentation of white respondents and the limited racial diversity, further limits the generalizability of the findings to more diverse populations.

The study's focus on measuring respondents' perceptions of interviewer confidence and pushback during job interviews overlooks crucial environmental factors that may influence interview dynamics. Factors such as industry type, organizational culture, the type of role that was being interviewed for, and the demographics of interviewers could significantly impact participants' experiences but were not adequately addressed in the study. In other words, differences in context could actually be driving the gender differences that I find in my study.

Another important limitation is the lack of consideration for the characteristics of interviewers, particularly in terms of who conducted the interviews on the firm's side. Different interviewers, such as HR professionals versus direct managers or supervisors, may approach interviews differently, leading to variations in the level of confrontation, bias, or training. Understanding the role of interviewer characteristics in shaping interview experiences is crucial for identifying potential sources of bias and developing strategies to mitigate them.

Finally, the study primarily relied on participants' perceptions of interviewer confidence and pushback, which may not always align with objective measures of interview dynamics.

Participants' biases, stereotypes, and individual experiences could influence their interpretations and memories of interview interactions, leading to discrepancies between perceived and actual levels of bias. Incorporating objective measures, such as observational studies or interviewer

ratings, could provide a more nuanced understanding of interview dynamics and participants' experiences.

Recommendations for Future Research

Moving forward, I suggest future research focused on the following suggestions to further explore the dynamics of gender bias in the hiring process and develop strategies to promote gender equity in the workforce.

Researchers should focus on conducting studies that systematically analyze the impact of environmental factors, such as industry type, organizational culture, and interviewer characteristics, on interview dynamics. I would envision that experiments where trained interviewees interact with interviewers to determine the true impact of gender would be highly informative. By examining how these contextual factors influence perceptions of interviewer confidence and encounters with pushback, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of gender bias in hiring processes and determine if the hiring process presents a key barrier to women entering upper management.

The incorporation of objective measures, such as observational studies or interviewer ratings, to complement participants' perceptions of interview experiences should assist in painting a clearer picture of the interview environment. By triangulating subjective perceptions with objective data, researchers can validate findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of interview dynamics.

Researchers conducting longitudinal studies tracking participants' career trajectories following job interviews could understand the long-term impact of interview experiences on career outcomes, such as job satisfaction, retention, and advancement. By examining how gender

biases in hiring processes translate into tangible career outcomes, researchers can identify strategies to mitigate systemic inequalities and promote gender equity in the workforce.

Finally, researchers should consider intersectional perspectives by examining how gender intersects with other social categories, such as race, ethnicity, age, and socioeconomic status, to influence interview experiences. By exploring how multiple dimensions of identity intersect to shape perceptions of interviewer confidence and encounters with pushback, researchers can develop targeted interventions to address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups in the hiring process.

Conclusion

The unexpected findings of this study serve as a catalyst for ongoing exploration into the multifaceted nature of gender dynamics within the hiring process. While the results may appear to deviate from established theories, they offer a unique opportunity to uncover the intricate interplay of various factors that shape interview experiences. Rather than viewing these findings as contradictory, they should be embraced as an invitation to delve deeper into the complexities of gender bias. By interrogating these nuances, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms at play and develop more nuanced theoretical frameworks that better capture the realities of the hiring process.

As the ways that bias impacts the careers of those in the non dominant group change and adapt to sustain societal structures it is important to uncover the best avenue to advance equality. It's essential to move beyond simplistic explanations and recognize the diverse array of factors that contribute to gender bias, including organizational culture, industry norms, and individual biases. By adopting a more holistic perspective, researchers and employers can better capture the

complex and context-dependent nature of gender bias and develop more effective strategies for addressing it. By embracing complexity and nuance, we can advance our understanding of gender dynamics in the hiring process and contribute to the creation of more equitable and inclusive workplaces.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 - Scale measuring perceived interview confidence

During the interview, how much did you feel that the interviewer(s) believed you were capable of the following:

	Completely confident	Somewhat confident	Neither confident nor not confident	Somewhat not confident	Not at all confident
Performing the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working well with the team that you would be hired into	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Contributing to the team's goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix 2 - Scale measuring perceived pushback or conflict in the interview

Please indicate the extent to which you perceived the following things:

	1 - None	2	3	4	5 - A Lot
Overt or subtle pushback against the things you said you were capable of doing during the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The extent to which your skills to succeed in the role were challenged by the interviewers at all during the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How critical do you feel the interviewer(s) were of you and your ability to succeed in the position you interviewed for?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>