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Comparing employment interviews in Latin America with other countries



Richard A. Posthuma^{a,*}, Julia Levashina^b, Filip Lievens^c, Eveline Schollaert^c, Wei-Chi Tsai^d, Maria Fernanda Wagstaff^e, Michael A. Campion^f

^a College of Business Administration, Room 230, University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, TX 79968, United States

^b Kent State University, United States

^c Ghent University, Belgium

^d National Chengchi University, Taiwan

^e University of Texas at El Paso, United States

^f Purdue University, United States

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ABSTRACT

This study compares job interviews ($n = 11,667$) in Mexico with those in the following countries: Belgium, Russia, Taiwan, and the U.S. The findings support our hypotheses, which are based on a meta-cultural framework. The results reveal that in Mexico and Taiwan women are less likely to conduct interviews. In addition, interviewers asked different questions. Outside the U.S., interviewers asked applicants about their family, marital status, and children. In Russia and Taiwan, they asked about applicants' reasons for quitting their last job. In Belgium, Russia, and Taiwan, they asked about applicants' wage and salary expectations. In Belgium and Russia, they less often asked about applicants' values, opinions, and beliefs. This study suggests that in some countries employment interviews are more than a test of job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities. This report provides a taxonomy that is useful for comparing interview questions in Latin American and other countries as well as directions for future research.

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1. Introduction

Business globalization has enhanced the need for more cross-national research on human resource (HR) practices (Aycan, 2005; Von Glinow, Drost, & Teagarden, 2002). However, HR practices embed in the local cultures of different countries. A few studies have responded to this need by demonstrating how the cultures of various countries influence HR practices in those countries. The present study helps to fill a gap in the understanding of how country culture influences employment interviews conducted in different countries.

1.1. Influence of country culture on employment interviews

Structured employment interviews can be successful in predicting actual job performance (Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002). Unfortunately, research on international employee selection procedures tends to focus primarily on selection of individuals for expatriate assignments at large multinational enterprises. A few studies have compared selection procedures used to hire local employees (e.g., host country nationals) in different countries, but almost no cross-cultural comparative

research on employment interviews exists. Even though the employment interview is one of the most common employee selection procedures, most of the research on employment interviews is in the contexts of the U.S., Canada, and a few European countries.

In addition, research on the employment interview in Latin America has important implications for both the academic and managerial communities. Structured employment interviews that focus on job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities can predict the future job performance of job candidates. However, in Latin America the questions asked in the interview may focus on issues that will not predict job performance. Researchers have reported that in Latin America interviewers ask women about their marital status and family planning during employment interviews (Bunse & Gonzalez, 2007). Some reports have suggested that job applicants receive questions about their socio-economic status and whether they are connected to important people (Rodriguez, 2010). Research should underscore the importance of moving toward more rational and validated HR practices (e.g., structured employment interviews) that focus on actual job qualifications. This would encourage organizations in Latin America to adopt these practices and thereby enhance the performance of their organizations (Klinger & Campos, 2001). Improved organizational performance will also enhance the economic development of Latin American countries (Arra, Eades, & Wilson, 2012).

Some scholars have argued that HR practices based on an Anglo-European model may not be useful in the Latin American context (Caldas, Tonelli, & Braga, 2011; Posthuma, Joplin, & Maertz, 2005).

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 915 747 8646; fax: +1 915 747 5348.

E-mail addresses: rposthuma@utep.edu (R.A. Posthuma), jlevashi@kent.edu (J. Levashina), Filip.Lievens@UGent.be (F. Lievens), Eveline.Schollaert@UGent.be (E. Schollaert), weichi@nccu.edu.tw (W.-C. Tsai), fwagstaff@utep.edu (M.F. Wagstaff), CampionM@Purdue.Edu (M.A. Campion).

This perspective may be valid because Latin American countries have their own unique historical development and may resist the imposition of foreign practices or cultures (Behrens, 2009; Elvira & Davila, 2005a; Posthuma, Dworkin, Torres, & Bustillos, 2000). Nevertheless, the employment interview could be one of the most useful HR practices in Latin America. The employment interview is a social interaction that can help to evaluate the social connections, social skills, and personal loyalties of applicants (Rodriguez, 2010). These social competencies are important in Latin American cultures where employment relationships develop based on social connections and personal relationships (Elvira & Davila, 2005b; Rodriguez & Gomez, 2009; Tanure & Gonzalez Duarte, 2005). Therefore, the employment interview has great promise for assessing important job-related skills in this region (Elvira & Davila, 2005a).

In addition, in Latin America the employment interview may be more than just an oral test of the qualifications of applicants. Interviews may function as the initiation of a potential social contract between the job candidate and the organization (Elvira & Davila, 2005b). From this perspective, questions that delve into subjects about social and family relationships test and evaluate the applicant's social skills and connections. These questions act as a first step in establishing a social contract.

Moreover, evidence shows that employment interviews are common and important in Mexico and many countries outside the U.S. For example, in Taiwan, the employment interview is one of the most important parts of the employee selection process (Von Glinow et al., 2002). Although some single-country studies examined the employment interview outside the U.S., only a very few are cross-national comparisons involving more than one country (e.g., Lopes & Fletcher, 2004). The lack of cross-cultural research is a significant concern because national culture can significantly influence managerial practices (Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004).

The use of culture to study employment interviews receives support from institutional theory that suggests that organizations comply with norms of the institutional environment in which they operate to overcome uncertainty and gain legitimacy (Kostova & Roth, 2002). Organizational practices are often direct reflections of the institutional environment that includes the national culture within which organizations operate (Scott, 1995).

Prior research that shows how national culture influences the degree of importance of particular selection methods and the choice of criteria used to evaluate job candidates supports the need for cross-cultural research on employment interviews (Von Glinow et al., 2002). Moreover, cultural influences that reduce the use of good interview practices that are successful in predicting future job performance may impair the validity of the employment interviews in predicting future job performance in some countries (Aycan, 2005). Therefore, this study investigates the extent to which country culture influences the ways in which employers conduct interviews in Latin America and other countries.

1.2. Meta-cultural integration of competing cultural frameworks

This study adopts a meta-cultural perspective. This perspective uses similar and overlapping culture constructs (e.g., collectivism, embeddedness) from several culture frameworks: Hofstede (2001), House et al. (2004) (GLOBE), and Schwartz (1994). For example, House et al. (2004) reported a .66 correlation between GLOBE's measure of in-group collectivism on their society practices scale and Schwartz's embeddedness value scale (Schwartz, 1994). The overlapping culture constructs serve as the theoretical justification for the hypothesized differences in employment interviews across countries.

Several frameworks describe how cultures differ across countries. Hofstede's (2001) framework is one of the most popular and widely used. Schwartz's (1994) values perspective offers another useful point of view. More recently, the GLOBE project has developed another cultural framework (House et al., 2004). These are three prominent examples of the many culture frameworks available to researchers.

Although these frameworks have substantial differences, they often contain similar or overlapping cultural concepts that use different names.

Each of these frameworks has strengths and weaknesses. For example, Hofstede's framework used data from a single organization and although the data collection occurred years ago, it has withstood the test of time. The GLOBE data are much more recent, but GLOBE uses data from many different organizations. Ongoing debates among scholars question which framework is the most valid and useful for international research. These debates create a dilemma for researchers who are trying to choose the best framework for their research.

Recent scholarship has encouraged the collection of original data from research participants using the scales developed under these competing frameworks. Ideally, researchers collect data using several different survey instruments from different cultural frameworks, then compare and contrast the results. However, this too creates a dilemma because collecting sufficient numbers of responses to lengthy survey instruments that contain many questions from multiple cultural frameworks can be difficult.

This study proposes an alternative meta-cultural perspective that can help to resolve these dilemmas. In this meta-cultural perspective, the proposed hypothesized relationships rely on similar and overlapping cultural concepts. In this way, the study triangulates theoretical justifications for the expected relationships across cultural models. For example, where concepts from Hofstede, GLOBE, and Schwartz lead to the same expectation about observed relationships, the study triangulates theoretical justification for the hypothesis with multiple cultural perspectives.

Where multicultural theory-based expectations rely on more than one country-level cultural framework, the likelihood that these overlapping conceptualizations of culture are the cause of the observed relationships is significantly increased. When multiple cultural frameworks all serve as the basis for the same predictions, methodological artifacts are less likely viable alternative explanations for the observed relationships. Thus, factors such as survey instrument wording, question scaling, and data sampling collection methods are less likely to be the source of data variance and less likely to constitute a threat to the validity of the study.

Therefore, this study applies a multi-cultural framework. Differences between cultures are a reason that employment interview practices vary from country to country. Therefore, in this study, the differences across countries are not limited to a particular cultural framework. Using this meta-cultural framework also mitigates concerns about whether within-country culture differences, differences in culture across time, and differences across organizational cultures are confounding the results. In addition, from the applied perspective for multi-national corporations, country-level differences in employment practices are an important topic to study because regional or country-level administrative structures dictate organizational design, and culture theories do not.

The Appendix highlights the similarities of the country culture scores from the sample of countries used. The figures in the Appendix A show the country-level culture scores for Mexico, Belgium, Russia, Taiwan, and the U.S. In a few cases, French scores serve as substitutes for missing Belgian scores. The scores across these five countries were standardized because each culture model uses different scaling techniques. Standardized Z-scores were used to create plots of culture measures that serve as the basis for the hypotheses explained below.

2. Cultural influences on employment interviews

This study focuses on three aspects of employment interviews to evaluate the influence of country culture. These aspects are: 1) the sex of the person conducting the interview, 2) constructs measured in the interview, and 3) the selection ratio used in the interview process.

2.1. Culture influence on the sex of the interviewer

Prior research has shown the importance of studying the sex of the interviewer (i.e., male versus female) because sex can have significant influence on evaluations of both the job applicants and the interviewer (Goldberg, 2003). For example, in Great Britain, job applicants rated female interviewers as less competent than male interviewers (Holloway & Johnston, 2006). Research from the relational demography perspective in the U.S. has shown that female interviewers gave higher ratings to female applicants (Graves & Powell, 1996) and that interviewers in the U.S. tended to ask different questions when the applicant was not the same sex as the interviewer (Binning, Goldstein, Garcia, & Scattaregia, 1988). However, prior research has not examined the influence of country culture on the sex of the interviewer.

Three frameworks have been integrated using similar and overlapping culture constructs to predict the use of females as interviewers. The GLOBE study reported differences in gender egalitarianism across countries. Countries that are higher on gender egalitarianism believe that society should rely less on biological sex to allocate roles (Emrich, Denmark, & Den Hartog, 2004). Therefore, they should be more likely than male-dominated societies to use females to conduct interviews. Similarly, Schwartz (1994) demonstrated how societies differ in their preferences for egalitarianism. More heavily egalitarian societies are more likely to use females as interviewers. Hofstede (2001) showed how societies differ in their degree of masculinity. For example, more heavily masculine cultures are less likely to use females as interviewers. Combining these three justifications into one hypothesis leads to the following prediction:

Hypothesis 1. Females are more likely to be interviewers in countries that are higher on gender egalitarianism and egalitarianism and lower on masculinity (e.g., Belgium and Russia).

2.1.1. Culture effects on constructs measured in the interview

Following the multi-cultural rationale used to formulate Hypothesis 1, several other hypotheses related to questions asked in interviews are proposed. Research in the U.S. has tended to focus on interview questions that measure psychological constructs related to job-related criteria (Posthuma et al., 2002). However, differences in national cultures across countries should affect the frequency with which different constructs are measured. This should be true because national culture influences interviewers' values and cognitions and therefore they ask questions that differ from those asked in other countries. These cultural differences manifest themselves through culture-related concerns that interviewers have about the degree to which applicants fit the job and organization, as spelled out below (Garcia, Posthuma, & Colella, 2008).

In some countries, the national culture may raise interviewers' concerns about whether applicants will want to establish and maintain a long-term relationship with their employer. Therefore, this study predicts that:

Hypothesis 2. Interview questions about reasons for quitting one's last job will be more frequent in countries that are higher on collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and future or long-term orientation (e.g., Russia and Taiwan).

In some countries, the national culture may increase interviewers' concerns about applicants' availability to perform any needed extra work. Therefore, this study predicts:

Hypothesis 3. Interview questions about availability to work extra hours and travel will be more frequent in countries that are high on individuality (e.g., U.S.) and low on collectivism or embeddedness and less frequent in other countries (e.g., Russia).

In some countries, the national culture may increase interviewers' concerns about whether applicants are more interested in the salary

they are entitled to receive than the work that they will perform. Therefore, this study predicts:

Hypothesis 4. Interview questions about wage and salary expectations will be more frequent in countries that have a performance orientation (e.g., Belgium, Russia, and Taiwan).

In some countries, the national culture may increase interviewers' concerns about humane treatment of employees. Therefore, this study predicts:

Hypothesis 5. Interview questions about values and opinions will be more frequent in countries that are higher on humane orientation (e.g., Mexico, Taiwan, and U.S.) and less likely in others (e.g., Belgium and Russia).

In some countries, the national culture may increase interviewers' concerns about the social milieu within which the employee is embedded since this could affect his or her work. Therefore, this study predicts:

Hypothesis 6. Interview questions about family, marital status, and children will be more frequent in countries higher on collectivism and embeddedness (e.g., Russia, Taiwan, and Mexico).

In some countries, the national culture may increase interviewers' concerns about whether applicants will be individually assertive. Therefore, this study predicts:

Hypothesis 7. Interview questions about the applicant's strengths and weaknesses will be more frequent in countries that are higher on assertiveness and individuality (e.g., U.S.) and less frequent in other countries (e.g., Taiwan).

2.1.2. Culture effects on selection ratios used

The validity and selection ratio of employee selection procedures combine to influence the usefulness of those procedures. Validity refers to the degree of the relationship between a selection test score and an employee's job performance after being hired. Voluminous literature demonstrates the validity of employment interviews (Posthuma et al., 2002).

The selection ratio refers to the number of people hired divided by the number of people who apply. A lower selection ratio means that the employer has selected only a few of those who have applied. Lower selection ratios are generally better than higher selection ratios. A lower selection ratio means that employers are more demanding in vetting the people they hire. When lower selection ratios are used, the performance of those hired should be higher. Despite the importance of selection ratios, comparatively little research has studied the factors that influence selection ratios, and no international cross-cultural comparative research has investigated differences in selection ratios.

The employment interview process inherently entails the applicant seeking employment and this puts the interviewer in a position of power and authority over the applicant. Therefore, in countries with higher tolerance for hierarchical relationships and higher power distance, interviewers will assert their power by interviewing more applicants, and applicants submit to participation interview with many applicants. Therefore, this study predicts:

Hypothesis 8. The selection ratios used with employment interviews will be lower in countries that have a higher tolerance for hierarchical relationships and higher power distance (e.g., Russia and Taiwan).

3. Methods

Unlike other research that focuses on individual employees, this study focuses on the job interview as the unit of analysis. The researchers collected data to analyze how multiple employers in different countries conduct interviews. Thus, the job interviews for actual employment openings formed the basis of separate observations.

3.1. Country representativeness and global generalizability

For most global businesses, managers who understand the differences between countries will be better able to manage across international borders (Von Glinow et al., 2002). Therefore, this study examines employment interviews in more than one country to enable comparisons across countries and cultures. Moreover, the countries chosen for this study (Belgium, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan, and the U.S.) enhance the extent to which the findings of this study are generalizable. These countries represent geographically dispersed areas across four directions around the globe: North, South, East, and West. They also represent four different climactic regions: Belgium = maritime, Mexico = desert, Russia = continental, Taiwan = subtropical humid, and U.S. = continental (Landes, 1998). These countries also fit into five different culture cluster regions: Belgium = Latin Europe, Mexico = Latin America, Russia = Eastern Europe, Taiwan = Confucian Asia, and U.S. = Anglo (e.g., House et al., 2004; Ronen & Shenkar, 1985). Thus, by including countries that are globally diverse and orthogonal on several dimensions, there is a greater possibility these findings will be more broadly and globally generalizable. In addition, Belgium was included because despite its cultural similarity to France it has not received as much research attention.

The researchers contacted employer representatives who conducted actual employment interviews in field settings with real applicants interviewing for real jobs. The researchers asked the interviewers about the interviews they conducted and recorded data from those interviews on questionnaires. Data came from employers in Belgium, Mexico, Russia, Taiwan, and the U.S. Bilingual speakers translated the data from Belgium, Mexico, Russia, and Taiwan into English. Separate variables were created for each country (e.g., 1 = Belgium, 0 otherwise).

The study employed content coding to create data from each of the questionnaires. Descriptive data included the number of jobs for which an interviewer conducted interviews, the number of persons interviewed, and the number of persons hired. From this information, we computed hiring selection ratios. In addition, we collected background data on the employer's industry type (e.g., manufacturing, retail, service) and the size of its workforce in terms of numbers of employees; these became the control variables because they may influence the content of job interviews (Barber, Wesson, Roberson, & Taylor, 1999). The mean number of employees was 1095. We used the reported number of employees for each employer per 1000 to calculate the *Employer Size* variable so that the scaling of this variable would match the other variables (i.e., actual number of employees/1000 = *Employer Size*).

Furthermore, interviewers provided information about aspects of interview structure (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997). They also provided information about the ratings they used (e.g., numeric rating scale, qualitative judgment) and indicated whether applicants were asked the same questions. For each of these questions, the answers were coded as applicable = 1 and 0 otherwise.

3.2. Taxonomy of interview questions

Respondents listed the actual questions used in the interviews for each job. The types of interview questions were categorized based a modified Delphi technique. The categories of interview questions were common across the entire sample. If more than 10% of all interviews contained these types of questions, the researchers retained that category for further analysis. The categories of interview question types are listed and defined below. They are listed in order of their frequency in the entire sample.

3.2.1. Prior jobs and job experience

These questions asked applicants to describe their prior job experience in a general way. Examples include: "Tell me about your prior jobs." and "What is your prior work experience?"

3.2.2. Job interest and career choices

These questions asked candidates to describe their interest in the job for which they applied or in the jobs they held in the past. Examples include: "Why are you interested in this type of job?" and "What would your ideal job be like?"

3.2.3. Job knowledge, skills, and abilities

These questions tested whether the candidates had the requisite knowledge, skills, and/or abilities to perform the job. Examples are: "Tell me how you would do [a job task]?" and "Try to sell this pen to me."

3.2.4. Education and training

These questions asked candidates about their academic degrees and other training. Examples are: "What was your major?" and "Where did you get your degree?"

3.2.5. Reason for leaving current or last job

These questions asked candidates to explain why they no longer worked for their prior employer or why they wanted to change jobs. Examples include: "Tell me why you left your last job." and "Why do you want to leave your current employer?"

3.2.6. Future career growth or career goals

These questions asked candidates to describe their desired future jobs or career advancement. Examples include: "Where do you see yourself in five years?" and "What goals do you have in your career?"

3.2.7. Availability for extra hours or travel

These questions asked candidates about their willingness to work overtime, weekends, and extra hours and to travel for work-related duties. Examples are: "How do you feel about working on weekends?" and "Would you be willing to travel?"

3.2.8. Knowledge or expectations of employer

These questions asked candidates to describe what they knew about the organization or what they expected the organization to be like. This category excluded expectations about specific tasks, duties, and responsibilities of the job. Instead, this category included only questions about the organization in general. Examples include: "Tell me what you know about [name of company]." and "What are your expectations of us?"

3.2.9. Problem solving

These questions asked candidates how they have solved or would solve problems at work. Examples are: "How do you solve problems?" and "We give them a math problem and ask them to solve it."

3.2.10. Wage or salary expectations

These questions asked candidates what they wanted or expected in terms of an acceptable salary. Examples of these questions include: "What are your salary expectations?" and "What are your expectations concerning your wages?"

3.2.11. Values, opinions, or beliefs

These questions asked candidates to identify their own values, beliefs, and opinions. Examples are: "Are you a Christian?" and "What values did you receive during your upbringing?"

3.2.12. Family, children, and marital status

These questions asked candidates to identify their marital status, whether they had children, and other aspects of their family circumstances. Examples of these questions are: "Are you married?" and "Do you have children and what are their ages?"

3.2.13. Strengths and weaknesses

These questions asked candidates to identify their own personal strong and weak points. Examples are: “What are your strengths and weaknesses?” and “What are your strong points?”

3.2.14. Personality

These questions identified aspects of an applicants' personality. Examples include: “Describe yourself in words (concerning your personality)” and “What is your personality?”

3.2.15. Conflict management style or skills

These questions asked candidates to describe how they solve conflicts with others. Examples of these questions include: “How do you react in conflict situations?” and “How would you handle a conflict between yourself and a coworker?”

3.2.16. Customer relations

These questions asked candidates to identify how they would interact with the organization's customers. Examples are: “How do you act if a client enters the store?” and “Describe your customer relations skills.”

3.2.17. Tell me about yourself

These questions asked candidates to describe themselves in a general way. An example of this type of questions is: “Tell me about yourself.”

3.2.18. Expectations of the job tasks, duties, and responsibilities

These questions asked candidates to describe their knowledge about or expectations of what they would do on the job if hired. These were not questions designed to test knowledge about how to do things, but rather descriptions of job content. Examples of these questions include: “What do you think this job entails?” and “What are your expectations about the duties of this job?”

3.2.19. Speech and oral communication skills

This factor evaluated the quality of the applicant's speaking and oral communication skills.

3.2.20. Hobbies or personal interests

These questions asked candidates about hobbies and personal interests that did not directly pertain to the job. Examples of these questions include: “Tell me about your hobbies.” and “What do you do in your spare time?”

3.2.21. Interpersonal skills

These questions asked candidates about their skills and abilities pertaining to relationships with other people. Examples include: “How well do you get along with others?” and “How do you react to people that you don't like to work with?”

3.2.22. Other expectations about the job

These questions asked candidates about expectations they had about the job apart from the company, tasks, duties, responsibilities, and salary. Examples of these questions include: “What are your expectations?” and “What do you expect from your working environment?”

3.2.23. Relationships with supervisors

These questions asked candidates about their prior experiences or expectations with their superiors. Examples of these questions include: “What would your prior boss say about you?” and “How do you handle authority?”

3.2.24. Initiative

These questions asked candidates to describe the reasons for their self-motivation and the degree to which they are self-motivated, take the initiative, or are ambitious. Examples of these questions include:

“What motivates you to succeed?” and “Give an example of a situation where you took the initiative and of which you are proud.”

3.2.25. Stress management or coping skills

These questions asked about candidates' experience with and ability to manage stressful situations. Examples include: “How do you handle stress?” and “What causes stress to you?”

3.2.26. Greatest accomplishment or achievements

These questions asked candidates to identify their most significant prior successful endeavors. Examples of these questions include: “Name 1 or 2 major accomplishments during your professional career. What was your personal contribution?” and “What have been your greatest successes?”

3.2.27. Leadership experience and skills

These questions asked candidates to identify their prior experiences and competencies in the role of leader, supervisor, or manager of other people. Examples are: “Do you have experience with leadership?” and “Tell me about your experience in supervising others.”

4. Results

Table 1 provides summary descriptive statistics that compare data across countries and totals for the entire data set used in this study. The data are from 479 interviewers who participated in the study. They interviewed 11,667 job applicants and hired 3405 of those they interviewed. These data indicate a mean selection ratio (number hired divided by number interviewed) of 29.2%, but it varied across countries. The selection ratio was highest in the U.S. (37.8%) and lowest in Belgium (17.8%). This suggests that interviews may be more useful in predicting job performance in some countries than in others. However, other factors also should be considered in future research. The fact that women were more likely to conduct employment interviews in some countries than in others was an interesting finding. Overall, women conducted most interviews (59.6%); however, in Belgium (78.1%) and Russia (87.6%), the percentage of interviews conducted by women was much higher. In contrast, in Mexico (32.2%) and Taiwan (24.7%), women conducted fewer interviews than men.

4.1. Interviewer sex

The results support Hypothesis 1. A logistic regression analysis in which the outcome variable was the use of females to conduct the job interview confirmed these results. Table 2 shows the results of this analysis. The outcome variable in this analysis is the sex (Female = 1, 0 = Male) of the interviewer. Step 1 entered control variables for industry type and employer size. Step 2 entered variables for countries (Mexico, Taiwan, Russia, and Belgium). The U.S. was omitted to avoid over-specification of the model. The data indicate a significant improvement in overall model fit at step 2, indicating that country helped to explain the use of females as interviewers. The individual parameter estimates indicate that interviewers were less likely to be females in Mexico and Taiwan, and more likely to be females in Russia and Belgium.

4.2. Interview questions

Table 3 lists the types of questions asked and shows the relative frequency with which interviewers asked these questions in different countries. The figures in this table represent the percentage of all interviews that contained the specific type of question. Several notable commonalities appeared across countries. First, in the most common type of question, interviewers asked candidates about their prior job experience (71.6% overall). Other frequently asked questions across countries related to the job interests and career choices of job candidates

Table 1
Sample descriptive statistics for employment interviews, by country.

Variable	Belgium	Mexico	Russia	Taiwan	U.S.	Total
<i>Interview characteristics</i>						
Number of interviewers	134	59	98	89	106	479
Number applicants interviewed	1858	2239	1204	2161	4205	11,667
Number hired	330	617	233	632	1589	3405
Mean selection ratio %	17.8	27.6	19.4	29.2	37.8	29.2
Female interviewers %	78.1	32.2	87.6	24.7	53.3	59.6
Interviews using rating scale %	14.6	32.2	13.3	25.2	41.5	24.3
Asked applicants same questions %	62.0	66.1	64.3	52.3	61.4	60.7
Used qualitative judgment %	73.0	57.6	54.8	52.8	44.3	57.4
<i>Employer characteristics</i>						
Service %	51.1	8.5	31.6	34.8	32.1	34.9
Retail %	14.6	30.5	53.1	21.4	45.3	32.0
Manufacturing %	27.0	59.3	11.2	39.3	17.0	27.8
Government %	7.3	1.7	1.0	14.9	5.7	4.1
Employer size (mean no. of employees)	1937	693	1277	590	425	1095

(50.2%); specific questions addressed candidates' job knowledge, skills, and abilities (46.9%) and prior education and training (37.1%).

The relative frequency with which questions about wage and salary expectations were asked, and also questions about availability for extra working hours and travel, suggests that the employment interview is commonly used to measure much more than simply a job candidate's job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). Thus, the employment interview is much more than simply an oral test of the candidates' job-related KSAs.

However, several notable differences across countries also became apparent. First, questions about wage and salary expectations were more frequent in Belgium (35.8%), Russia (26.5%), and Taiwan (25.8%) than in the U.S. (8.5%). Questions about personal values, opinions, and beliefs were more common in Taiwan (38.2%) and the U.S. (29.3%) than in Belgium (9.5%) or Russia (3.1%). Questions about the job candidates strengths and weaknesses and prior accomplishments were much less common in Taiwan (4.5%) than in other countries (16.9% overall). Also, questions about personal hobbies or interests were more common in Taiwan (28.1%) and Belgium (20.4%) than in Mexico (6.8%) and the U.S. (2.8%). Also, questions about the candidate's greatest accomplishments or achievements were less common in Taiwan (0.0%) than in other countries (10.4%).

Table 2
Hierarchical logistic regression analysis of frequency of use of female interviewers, by industry, employer size, and country.

	Step 1	Step 2
	Exp (B)	Exp (B)
<i>Controls</i>		
Service	1.058	0.849
Retail	1.057	0.981
Manufacturing	0.442	0.600
Employer size	1.111	1.030
<i>Countries</i>		
Mexico	–	0.487*
Taiwan	–	0.313**
Russia	–	5.955**
Belgium	–	3.293**
X ²	21.75**	124.43**
–2 log likelihood	629.813	527.136
Pseudo R ²	.06	.31
Classification accuracy	62.3%	71.4%

N = 490.
* p < .05.
** p < .01.

Table 3
Percentages of Interviews with question type, by country.

Question type	Belgium	Mexico	Russia	Taiwan	U.S.	Total
Prior jobs and job experience	78.8	55.9	86.7	62.9	64.2	71.6
Job interests and career choices	68.6	40.7	42.9	36.0	50.9	50.2
Job knowledge, skills, and abilities	37.2	42.4	68.4	41.6	46.2	46.9
Education and training	44.5	40.7	40.1	37.1	22.6	37.1
Reason for leaving current or last job	24.8	23.7	51.0	43.8	13.2	30.8
Future growth or career goals	27.0	27.1	22.5	27.0	20.8	24.7
Availability for extra hours or travel	27.0	22.0	9.2	24.7	33.0	23.7
Knowledge or expectations of employer	23.4	13.6	15.3	38.2	22.7	22.9
Problem solving	15.3	18.6	30.6	31.5	19.8	22.9
Wage or salary expectations	35.8	3.4	26.5	25.8	8.5	22.2
Values, opinions, or beliefs	9.5	20.3	3.1	38.2	29.3	19.0
Family, children, marital status	12.4	22.0	30.6	30.3	0.9	18.0
Strengths and weaknesses	29.2	15.3	10.2	4.5	18.9	16.9
Personality	7.3	13.6	21.4	32.6	14.2	16.9
Conflict management style or skills	8.8	18.6	12.2	12.4	32.1	16.5
Customer relations	13.1	3.4	20.4	7.9	32.1	16.5
Tell me about yourself	16.8	8.5	14.3	19.1	17.9	15.9
Expectations of the job TDRs	20.4	6.8	12.2	30.3	5.7	15.7
Speech oral communication skills	2.2	22.0	22.5	25.8	12.3	15.1
Hobbies or personal interests	20.4	6.8	13.3	28.1	2.8	14.9
Interpersonal skills	8.0	25.4	12.2	12.4	17.9	14.1
Other expectations	18.3	6.8	24.5	13.5	0.0	14.1
Relationships with supervisors	9.5	3.4	9.2	16.9	18.9	12.0
Initiative	26.3	0.0	8.2	4.5	7.6	11.4
Stress management or coping skills	10.2	5.1	8.2	9.0	18.9	10.8
Greatest accomplishments/achievements	8.8	18.6	13.3	0.0	14.2	10.4
Leadership experience and skills	10.2	15.3	11.2	6.7	8.5	10.2

TDRs = tasks, duties, and responsibilities.

The researchers confirmed these results in several logistic regression analyses in which the outcome variables were the different interview questions. Table 4 shows the results of these analyses. The outcome variables in these analyses indicate the presence of a specific type of interview question (present = 1, 0 otherwise). Control variables for industry type, employer size, and females conducting the interview were included in each equation; also added were dummy variables (1, 0) for countries (Mexico, Taiwan, Russia, and Belgium).

These results are generally supportive of Hypotheses 2 through 7. The data confirm that interviewers in Taiwan and Belgium were more likely to ask candidates their reasons for quitting their last job (Hypothesis 2). The data also indicate a lower likelihood in Russia that candidates will be asked about their willingness to work overtime or travel (Hypothesis 3). The data also indicate an increased likelihood that interviewers will ask candidates about their expected wages in Taiwan, Russia, and Belgium (Hypothesis 4). In addition, the data indicate a lower likelihood that interviewers will ask candidates about their personal opinions or values in Belgium and Russia (Hypothesis 5). The data also strongly indicate that in all countries outside the U.S. interviewers were more likely to ask candidates about their family, marital status, and children (Hypothesis 6). Finally, interviewers were less likely to ask candidates about their strengths and weaknesses in Taiwan than in other countries (Hypothesis 7).

4.3. Selection ratio

The results generally support Hypothesis 8. Table 5 reports the results of a hierarchical regression analysis in which the selection ratio for each interview was the outcome variable. In that analysis, variables for industry, employer size, and whether the interviewer was

Table 4
Logistic regression analysis of use of different question types, by industry, employer size, and country.

Variable	Question types					
	Reason for quitting	Availability, overtime, travel	Wages & salary expected	Values, opinions, & beliefs	Family, married, children	Strengths & weaknesses
	Exp (B)	Exp (B)	Exp (B)	Exp (B)	Exp (B)	Exp (B)
Service	2.949	0.614	1.851	0.723	0.634	1.237
Retail	1.523	0.909	1.312	0.320	1.133	0.469
Manufacturing	2.029	0.495	2.240	0.608	0.317	1.007
Employer size	0.940	0.994	0.979	0.755	0.918	1.054
Female interviewer	0.861	0.730	1.581	0.930	1.432	1.145
Mexico	2.080	0.650	0.356	0.661	48.289**	0.736
Taiwan	4.834**	0.770	3.828**	1.319	77.058**	0.183**
Russia	8.038**	0.203**	3.605**	0.091**	43.657**	0.459
Belgium	2.033	0.967	5.021**	0.229**	18.880**	1.227
χ^2	58.06**	27.57**	52.396**	65.04**	74.92**	41.40**
–2 log likelihood	540.419	500.307	460.966	399.479	383.642	401.796
Pseudo R ²	.16	.08	.16	.20	.23	.14
Classification accuracy	70.8%	76.4%	77.6%	81.0%	81.8%	82.8%

N = 490.
** p < .01.

female were entered as control variables in the first step. In the second step, the researchers entered variables for country, leaving out the U.S. as a comparison standard to avoid over-specification of the model. The results indicate significant and negative coefficients for Taiwan, Russia, and Belgium. This indicates that the selection ratios in those countries tended to be lower than in Mexico or the U.S. For example, Russia had the highest power distance measures of all the countries in this sample. The coefficient for Russia was significant and negative, confirming that the selection ratio in Russia was lower than in the U.S. and Mexico, countries with lower power distance. However, these results were somewhat mixed since Belgium also had a lower selection ratio.

5. Discussion, conclusions, and limitations

This is one of the first studies to compare actual job interviews from more than one country. The meta-cultural framework adopted in this study enabled us to analyze employment interviews conducted in several countries and avoid the dilemmas of tying this study to only one cultural perspective. This study demonstrates the usefulness of adopting a multi-cultural perspective through the confirmation of predicted differences in the degree to which interviews were conducted by females, the questions asked in interviews, and the selection ratios used in different countries.

The results of this study are tentative because the study did not measure the culture for each of the job candidates and there were no controls for the variety of other variables, such as differences between the economic contexts in which firms operate and HR practices (e.g., Japanese-style practices). In addition, national cultures are not monolithic within countries, and local subcultural differences could influence results such as those observed here. In addition, the results may have been influenced by a social desirability bias if respondents believed that they should report the types of questions asked in good interview practice. Thus, until future research addresses these factors or directly measures them, scholars must consider results reported in studies such as ours to be tentative.

5.1. Future research

Prior research has viewed the employment interview as an oral examination that tests job candidates' job-related knowledge, skills, and abilities. The data here suggest that employers often ask job candidates questions that do not fit within the traditional role of job-related psychological constructs measured in the interview. Questions such as why candidates left their last job, their availability

for overtime work, and their wage and salary expectations were common in many countries. Prior empirical research has confirmed the usefulness of some of these questions by showing how candidate answers to them can accurately predict counterproductive work behaviors (Posthuma, Campion, & Vargas, 2005).

In addition, the data from Mexico and other countries outside the U.S. indicate a much higher prevalence of questions about the candidate's family (Table 4). These questions may indicate a concern about work-family conflicts that could interfere with the employee's job performance. Alternatively, they may help in assessing the value of a job applicant's social capital deriving from family connections. However, perhaps interviewers ask these questions because they demonstrate that the interview is a process that includes the initiation of a potential social contract between the employer and the job candidate's social network, which includes his or her family. Thus, future research should explore whether the social contract function of employment interviews conducted in Latin America may be an exemplar of the social contract function of job interviews that also occurs in other countries.

This study hypothesized that the differences in selection ratios across countries may be in part attributable to differences in power distance. This hypothesis is somewhat supported, yet other possibilities such as labor market conditions and the acceptance of psychometrically sound hiring practices should be explored in future research.

Table 5
Hierarchical regression analysis of selection ratio, by industry, employer size, interviewer sex, and country.

Variables	Step 1	Step 2
	Standardized (B)	Standardized (B)
Controls		
Industry		
Service	–.110	–.091
Retail	–.134	–.129
Manufacturing	–.135	–.120
Employer size	–.009	.001
Female interviewer	–.045	–.036
Countries		
Mexico	–	–.059
Taiwan	–	–.245**
Russia	–	–.231**
Belgium	–	–.152*
F	0.554	6.556**
R ²	.006	.060

N = 490.
* p < .05.
** p < .01.

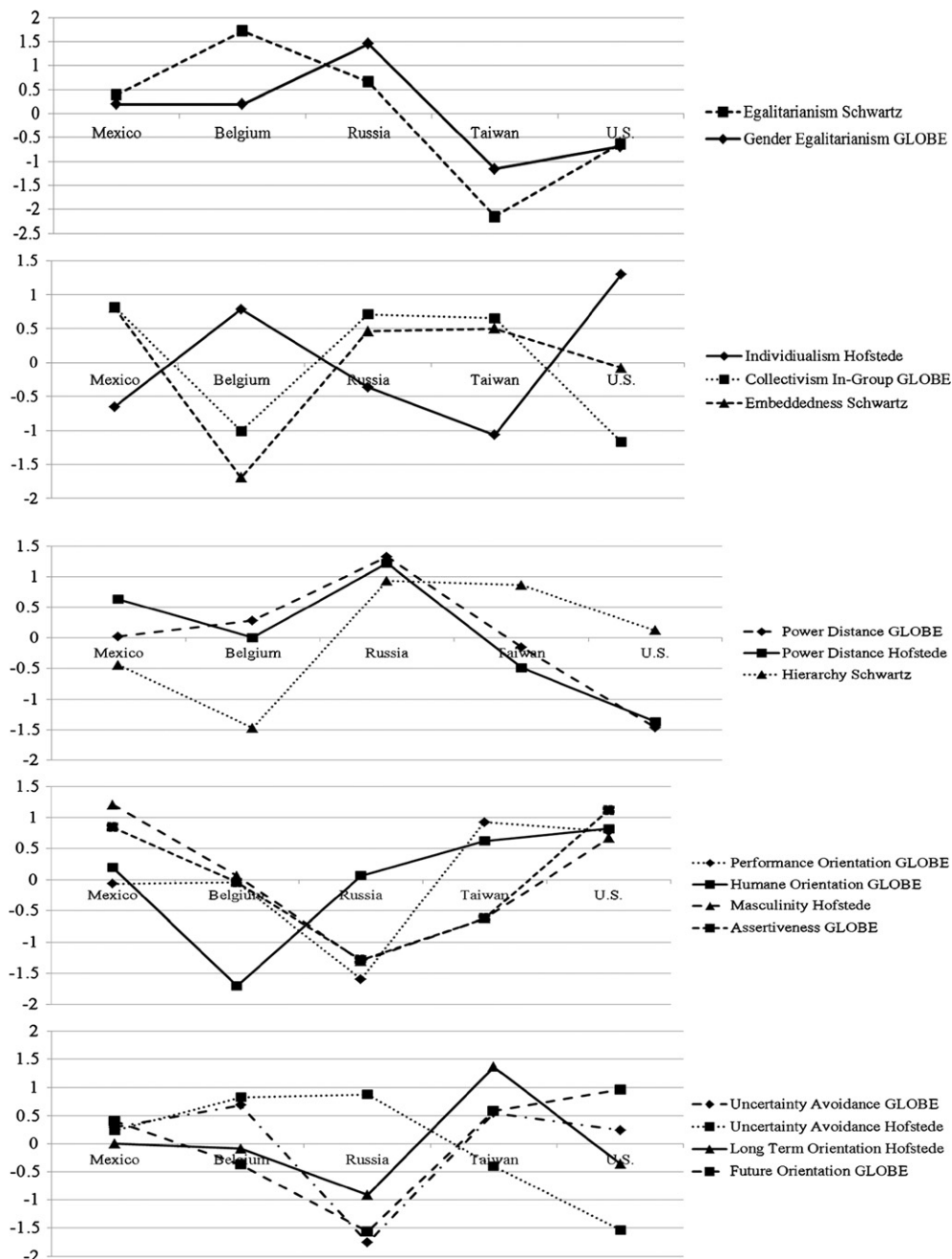
This study included one measure of interview structure, namely, whether the interviewers asked all of the applicants the same questions. The data in Table 1 suggest that in most countries the rate at which interviewers ask all applicants the same question is about 60%. The highest rate was in Mexico (66.1%) and the lowest in Taiwan (52.3%). This suggests differences in interview structure across countries. Less-structured interviews tend to be less valid and are less able to predict future job performance. Future research should examine the reasons for differences in structure across countries. For example, are interviews more structured in Latin America as these preliminary data suggest and, if so, why? Future researchers can also look at other aspects of interview structure such as the constructs measured and past and future behavioral interview questions. An important question is whether country

cultures or other factors may be limiting the degree of interview structure in some countries. In addition, prior research has demonstrated within country, regional, and subcultural differences in research in Latin America (Posthuma et al., 2000). In general, the field needs more theoretically driven research to explain how and why interviews differ across and within countries.

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Appendix A Comparing country cultures using standardized Hofstede, GLOBE, and Schwartz



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