

# **What's in a Name?**

## **The Influence of Gender Expectations on Student Responses to Situational Judgment Tasks**

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# Developing a Test

## Educators & Test Developers:

- ▶ What questions should we ask?

## Editors:

- ▶ How should we ask those questions?

## Psychometric Experts:

- ▶ Exactly!

# Power of Words

## To Change Meaning

- ▶ Success is **a** goal.
- ▶ Success is **the** goal.

## To Provide Emphasis

- ▶ He failed the **second** test.
- ▶ He failed the test **again**.

## To Add Context

- ▶ Real-world situations

# Situational Judgment Tasks (SJT)

Provide a context to allow us to ask the question:

- ▶ What should you do?

“A picture can tell a thousand words”



“A picture can tell a thousand words, **but a few words can change its story.**”

– Sebastyne Young



**He** led the team that created the aerial photograph.

**She** led the team that created the aerial photograph.

# The “Do You Love Your Child” SJT

Terry was offered a promotion at her company. The promotion would require her to work the night shift. By working the night shift, she will miss spending time with her son. What should Terry do?

- ▶ Terry should take the promotion and explain to her son how the extra income will benefit him.
- ▶ Terry should reject the promotion and quit her job to spend as much time with her son as possible.
- ▶ Terry should take the promotion and start to look for a job with the same pay that has better hours.
- ▶ Terry should reject the promotion and start to look for a better paying job with the same hours.



# Research on Gender Expectations

## Gender Congruency Theory (Bradley, 1981)

### Gender Expectations

- ▶ Shape expectations & evaluation of performance (Wagner & Berger, 1997)
- ▶ Males may be more flexible than females in regard to gender-role expectations for communication style (Duran & Carveth, 1990)

# Gender Expectations

## Men

- ▶ Assertive and dominant (Eagly and Karau, 1991)
- ▶ Prioritize work (Konrad & Cannings, 1997)



# Gender Expectations

## Women

- ▶ Supportive and selfless (Gilligan, 1982)
- ▶ Prioritize family (Konrad & Cannings, 1997)



# Research Questions

## Question 1:

- ▶ Do students respond differently to SJTs based on the gender of the actor?

## Question 2:

- ▶ Are there differences among contexts?

# Current Study

Created Three Versions for 14 of 19 SJT Items

- ▶ Male Primary Actor
- ▶ Female Primary Actor
- ▶ Gender Neutral Primary Actor

The 5 items not used would have required major revisions to the item to create a gender neutral version.

# Current Study

Examined 1,311 Student Responses to SJT Items

- ▶ 843 Female Students
- ▶ 468 Male Students

Students were randomly assigned to test forms.

Only one version of an item per form.

# Research Question I

**Q1:** Do students respond differently to SJTs based on the gender of the actor?

## Hypothesis

- ▶ Both male and female student responses will differ based on whether the primary actor in a SJT is male or female.

## Findings

- ▶ There were statistically significant differences on 5 of the 14 items.

# Research Question I: Results

	Male Students	Female Students
SJT Item 2	$X^2 (6) = 34.45, p < 0.01$	$X^2 (6) = 37.48, p < 0.01$
SJT Item 4		$X^2 (6) = 20.12, p < 0.05$
SJT Item 5		$X^2 (6) = 25.03, p < 0.01$
SJT Item 6*	$X^2 (6) = 16.56, p < 0.05$	$X^2 (6) = 29.94, p < 0.01$
SJT Item 13		$X^2 (6) = 13.45, p < 0.05$

Calculated using chi-square tests, applying Bonferroni's adjustment procedure to control for Type I error. Effect size was measured using Cramer's V (bold indicates a medium effect size; all others had a small effect size).

\* For this item, one category of students was less than 5 (the recommended minimum for a chi-square test).



# Research Question 1: Discussion

- ▶ The difference in how males and females responded was most often driven by responses for the neutral-gender actor.
  - ▶ Neutral actors were most often “assigned” a solution that was neutral or passive by both men and women test-takers
  - ▶ Neutral actors were more likely to be assigned a solution that was counterproductive or might bend the rules, especially by male test-takers.
  - ▶ Gendered actors (male or female) were more likely to be assigned solutions that were direct and open than the neutral actors.
- ▶ Women actors tended to be assigned solutions that were social or involved a discussion by both men and women test-takers

# Research Question 2

**Q2:** Are there differences among contexts?

## Hypothesis

- ▶ There will be different expectations based on the actor's gender for contexts involving conflict resolution, communication, and work/life balance. Contexts such as stress management will not show differences.

# Research Question 2:

## Are there differences among contexts?

### Contexts

- ▶ Conflict Resolution
- ▶ Employability & Career Development
- ▶ Information & Communication
- ▶ Leadership & Teamwork

# Context:

## Conflict Resolution

- ▶ Analyze the impact of emotions, needs, and concerns of others in an organizational setting (2 Items)
- ▶ Determine best options/outcomes for conflict resolution using critical thinking skills (2 Items)
- ▶ Identify solutions for resolving conflicts (1 Item)
- ▶ Analyze situations and behaviors that affect conflict management (1 Item)
- ▶ Identify stress management techniques (2 Items)

# Context:

## Conflict Resolution

Significant differences on 2 of 7 SJTs.

- ▶ Analyze the impact of emotions, needs, and concerns of others in an organizational setting (0 of 2 Items)
- ▶ Determine best options/outcomes for conflict resolution using critical thinking skills (0 of 2 Items)
- ▶ Identify solutions for resolving conflicts (1 of 1 Items)
- ▶ Analyze situations and behaviors that affect conflict management (1 of 1 Items)
- ▶ Identify stress management techniques (0 of 2 Items)

# Context:

## Employability & Career Development

- ▶ Manage work roles and responsibilities to balance them with other life roles and responsibilities (3 Items)

Significant differences on 1 of 3 SJTs.

- ▶ Manage work roles and responsibilities to balance them with other life roles and responsibilities (1 of 3 Items)

# Context:

## Information & Communication

- ▶ Interpret nonverbal behaviors when communicating with clients and coworkers (1 Item)
- ▶ Apply factors and strategies for communicating with a diverse workforce (1 Item)

# Context:

## Information & Communication

Significant differences on 2 of 2 SJTs.

- ▶ Interpret nonverbal behaviors when communicating with clients and coworkers (1 of 1 Items)
- ▶ Apply factors and strategies for communicating with a diverse workforce (1 of 1 Items)



# Context:

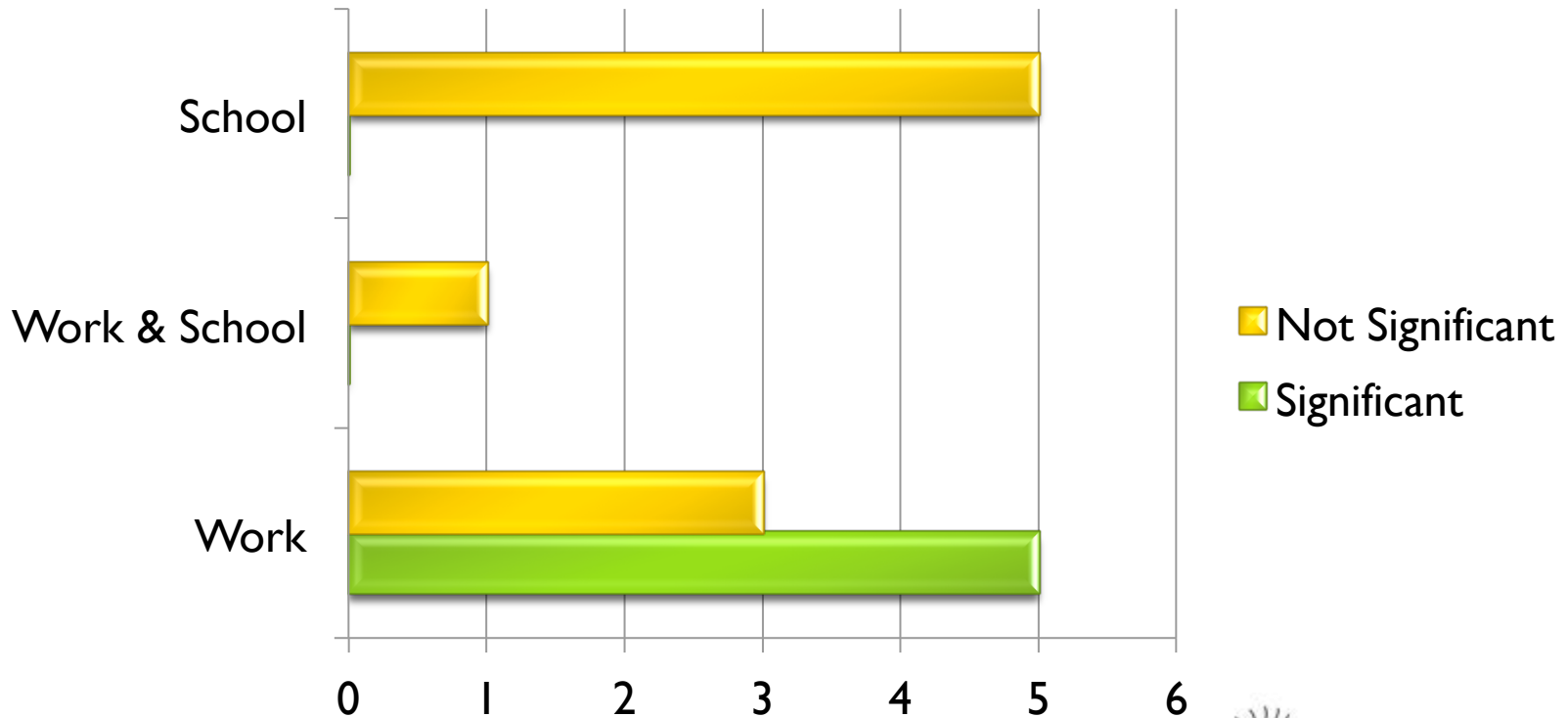
## Leadership & Teamwork

- ▶ Consider challenges related to leadership, such as diversity, environment, or global awareness (1 Item)

No significant differences on 1 SJT.

# Situational Setting

## Significance by Situational Setting



# Discussion of Findings: Male vs. Female Actors

## Editing Out the Obvious Offenders

- ▶ Revising Item Contexts
  - ▶ To be relevant for students
  - ▶ To minimize expected gender differences
- ▶ Cutting Items

# Discussion of Findings: Gendered vs. Gender Neutral Actors

## Naming: Assigning Identity

- ▶ Actor identity vs. actor gender
- ▶ Gender neutral vs. second person

# What's Next?

## Examining Rater Responses

- ▶ Do raters respond differently to SJTs based on the gender of the actor?
- ▶ Do students and raters exhibit the same expectations of gender roles (i.e., do they have higher agreement based on actor gender)?

# Further Research

- ▶ Comparing gender neutral vs. second person
- ▶ Examining context further: work vs. school
- ▶ Examining items beyond SJTs
  - ▶ Multiple-choice story problems

# How We Frame the Story

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# Questions?