Understanding the Academic–Practitioner Gap for Structured Interviews: 'Behavioral' interviews diffuse, 'structured' interviews do not

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Recent studies about the academic–practitioner gap suggest that the nonadoption of evidenced-based practices can be explained by their diffusion through practitioner-oriented literature. This study extends these findings by investigating the case of the structured interview, which has not been widely adopted by practitioners despite its good psychometric properties. Using a social representations approach, we investigate how the academic concepts of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviewing are diffused to practitioners in advice books. Results show that 'behavioral' interviews diffuse while 'structured' interviews do not, and that different arguments are used to describe these concepts. Facilitating the diffusion of structured interview practices requires academics to rethink their ways of communicating with practitioners through media.

1. Introduction

For decades, personnel selection researchers have advocated increasing the validity and reliability of interviews by increasing their structure. Yet, structured interview techniques are often described as being infrequently adopted by practitioners (Lievens & De Paepe, 2004; Ryan, McFarland, Baron, & Page, 1999; Terpstra & Rozell, 1993; van der Zee, Bakker, & Bakker, 2002). Numerous studies have examined individual and organizational factors explaining this nonadoption (e.g., Dipboye, 1994; Klehe, 2004; Lievens & De Paepe, 2004; van der Zee et al., 2002). In this paper, we argue that the lack of adoption of structured interviews can also be explained by media sources practitioners use when they seek information about how to conduct interviews. Practitioners are not directly influenced by research findings, because they seldom read scientific journals (Rynes, Colbert, & Brown, 2002; Sanders, van Riemsdijk, & Groen, 2008). Rather, they prefer reading practitioner-oriented magazines (Rynes et al., 2002) or advice books (Palmer, Campion, & Green, 1999) and thus may be more likely to adopt practices accessible to them from popular literature (Subramony, 2006). Therefore, how structured interview techniques are described in this popular literature can clarify an important but unstudied link in the academic–practitioner gap in personnel selection. We therefore investigate how the concept of structured interviewing is described in advice books over time. In what follows, we first describe the different worlds of the science and practice of selection interviewing before describing approaches that theorize how structured interviews may diffuse from academics to practitioners. Using a social representations approach, we then investigate to what extent and how the concept of structured interviewing is diffused in advice books.

2. Structured interviewing: science and practice

The concept of interview structure is multidimensional (Chapman & Zweig, 2005) and there is no unique definition of the structured interview. Two main ways of structuring interviews have been explored by research: the standardization of the interview process (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994) and the use of patterned behavior or situational questions

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(Janz, 1982; Latham, Saari, Pursell, & Campion, 1980). Some authors consider the use of such questions as being only one aspect of interview structure (e.g., Campion et al., 1997; Chapman & Zweig, 2005), while others consider them as specific interview types (e.g., Latham & Skarlicki, 1996; Motowidlo et al., 1992). Still others (Barclay, 1999) use the terms interchangeably. Structured interviews as a general interview form thus involve following a standardized procedure, such as basing questions on job analyses, asking the same questions to all applicants, rating answers on anchored scales, and asking better questions (Campion, Campion, & Hudson, 1994; Campion et al., 1997; Campion, Pursell, & Brown, 1988; Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994). Behavioral interviews focus on asking applicants to describe how they would behave in hypothetical job situations (Latham & Saari, 1984; Latham et al., 1980; Latham & Sue-Chan, 1999; Maurer, 1997) or how they actually behaved in the past (Janz, 1982; Motowidlo et al., 1992). Both standardization and the use of behavioral questions increase psychometric properties beyond those of traditional unstructured interviews. For instance, standardizing interview questions and response scoring can increase predictive validity scores to .57 (Huffcutt & Arthur, 1994). Similarly, behavioral interviews show validity coefficients between .32 and .48 (Latham & Sue-Chan, 1999; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1995).

There is a well-documented contrast between the merits of structured interviews and their adoption in personnel selection practice. Traditionally, surveys have not found structured interviews to be in widespread use. For instance, Terpstra and Rozell (1993) found that only 29% of organizations used structured interviews. Lievens and De Paepe (2004) showed that only 20% of practitioners determined all main and follow-up questions in advance. Ryan et al. (1999) measured the proportion of organizations asking fixed interview questions in 20 countries and found results ranging from 10.3% (in Italy) to 59.1% (in Australia). However, despite this general pattern, some studies report much higher adoption rates. For instance, 62% of British organizations reportedly use structured interviews (Barclay, 1999) and 85.7% of Canadian organizations use them 'always' or 'most of the time' (Simola, Taggar, & Smith, 2007). A recent survey with 2,500 US human resource (HR) executives found that 81% of them already used behavioral interviews or planned to use them in a near future (Nancherla, 2008). Furthermore, an older Swiss survey (Thom & Zaugg, 1996) found that 85% of a sample of HR professionals used structured interviews.

It is unclear to what the discrepancies between these figures are due (e.g., there does not seem to be a uniformly increasing trend over time). One possible explanation may be linked to the lack of consensus in the academic literature on structured interviews that was documented above. Academics are in the business of conceptual precision, and even if they do not agree on what constitutes an object of study, they are liable to define what they mean when using a particular label. However, practitioners (the respondents in the surveys reviewed above) are less likely to explicitly articulate labels like 'structure' (Shrivastava & Mitroff, 1984). The polysemy and lack of consensus around the concept of structure may lead survey respondents to have very different concepts of what is a structured interview and thus to divergent results about the adoption rates of structured interviews, especially if the dimensions of the concept are not made explicit (Lievens & De Paepe, 2004). Implicit in such an explanation of the conflicting adoption rates above is the idea that the concept of structured interviews may change when it is diffused from academic discourse to practice. In the following section, we describe the theory of social representations, a framework from social psychology that describes how concepts change in content when diffusing from science to the general public. We then use this framework to derive hypotheses about the diffusion of the concept of structured interviews from personnel selection research to practitioners.

2.1. *Diffusion of the structured interview: a social representations approach*

The theory of social representations (Moscovici, 1984; Wagner & Hayes, 2005) seeks to describe the social processes by which scientific knowledge is transformed into everyday knowledge used by laypersons. In modern societies, scientific findings and technological innovations are omnipresent in the public sphere, being repeatedly diffused in the media or introduced into everyday routines. These ideas and technologies are often abstract, unfamiliar, and complex in nature, and thus threatening to laypersons, who tend to assimilate them to preexisting schemes, a process called *anchoring* (Wagner & Hayes, 2005). For example, a seminal study showed that media depictions of psychoanalysis compared it with the Catholic rite of confession (Moscovici, 1961). Another showed that folk theories of madness assimilate it to organic illness (Jodelet, 1991). Work on social representations of biotechnology shows that genes are described as being something that is 'injected' into genetically modified food (Wagner, Kronberger, & Seifert, 2002). The end result of anchoring processes typically is an increased 'fit' between the novel concept and preexisting lay schemes of thought.

The social representations approach advocates studying the progressive transformation of content that occurs when a scientific concept diffuses in popular culture. The mass media is a prominent vector of these diffusion processes; indeed, it is through repeated media depictions that the meaning of a concept changes over time. Social representations researchers thus conduct

longitudinal studies of mass media coverage of a concept, or experimental studies featuring repeated transmission of information along a chain of individuals (Bangerter, 2000; E. G. T. Green & Clémence, 2008). These studies reveal that anchoring involves selective retention, suppression, or amplification of certain aspects of a concept. In a study of the Mozart effect (i.e., the now-debunked finding that listening to classical music increases intelligence), Bangerter and Heath (2004) found that media depictions of what constituted the Mozart effect evolved over several years. The original scientific results were selectively distorted, such that limitations on the original findings (e.g., the short-term nature of the effect) were dropped, whereas other aspects were amplified or even invented. Over time, the social representation of the Mozart effect came to fit more and more with laypersons' concerns about the enhancement of children's intelligence, thus illustrating how transformation of content often increases the fit between the original concept and lay concerns.

Social representations theory can be applied to understand the diffusion and adoption of structured interviews. Interview structure is a complex and multidimensional concept. A study of recruiters' social representations found that structure was assimilated to the notion of 'having a list of questions' (Bangerter, Krings, Petetin, & Blatti, 2008). Moreover, the labels 'structured' and 'unstructured' exhibited both positive and negative connotations, thereby influencing responses to questions about recruiters' practices. More generally, however, social representations theory offers a novel perspective on understanding the diffusion of structured interviews in at least three ways. First, it suggests the importance of a long-term, dynamic perspective on *processes* of diffusion and adoption as a complement to cross-sectional surveys on *outcomes* such as those reviewed above. Second, it suggests focusing on the intermediary actors (e.g., journalists and the mass media) that translate scientific findings into social representations. Third, it suggests focusing on the transformation of content over time, in other words analyzing which aspects of a concept get diffused and which aspects do not. We now use these guidelines to describe the rationale of our study on the diffusion of structured interviews in the advice literature for recruiters.

2.2. *Studying the process of structured interview diffusion across the academic–practitioner gap*

Recently, Rynes, Giluk, and Brown (2007) suggested that practitioners do not adopt evidence-based practices because they do not read research literature and are thus not exposed to academic findings. They prefer to read intermediate literature, such as practitioner-oriented periodicals or books, to get information about management-related evidence. Yet, such literature does not focus on academic findings. For instance, three important research findings received little coverage in popular US (Rynes et al., 2007) and British (Guest, 2007) periodicals. Coverage was also sometimes inconsistent with research findings. Rynes et al. (2007, p. 999) concluded that there is 'a very significant failure of academic research to transfer to important practitioner sources of information.' This finding is important, not least because it complements survey studies by focusing on intermediate literature. But it has some limitations. First, structured interviewing was not investigated. Second, the finding reflects an outcome but does not inform us about the processes leading to that outcome. Third, and consequently, it is not clear how inconsistencies with research findings have emerged. In this article, we extend Rynes et al.'s study to the case of structured interviews and to the study of another kind of intermediate literature, advice books (or how-to books). Such books are popular among practitioners, despite being often criticized by academics (Freeman, 1985). In personnel selection, they are used by recruiters as a complement to training provided by consultants (Palmer et al., 1999). We adopt a social representations perspective as described above, analyzing trends in the presence of structured interviews in advice books about selection interviews over the long term (two decades), in order to investigate processes of diffusion rather than outcomes, and thus explaining how possible inconsistencies between research and practice may emerge. Below we describe three sets of hypotheses pertaining to these processes.

Social representations research suggests that, through the process of anchoring, the content of structured interviews as represented in media coverage will be transformed so as to better fit practitioners' schemes of thought and concerns. This offers a rationale for predicting systematic differences in how content emerges and survives in the advice literature over time. More specifically, we suggest a difference in how the concepts of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews will diffuse over time. We use these two labels in quotation marks to refer to two distinct interview forms in the advice literature. As described above, the difference between these two labels in the scientific literature is tenuous – behavioral interviews are often viewed as a subcategory of structured interviews. However, the way these concepts are described in the advice literature may deviate from the original scientific concepts. Many previous studies have documented negative perceptions of structured interviews on the part of recruiters (Chen, Tsai, & Hu, 2008; Dipboye, 1994). Recruiters consider unstructured interviews to have more value, to be more accepted by their organization, and to allow more control over the selection process (van der Zee et al., 2002). They also believe structured interviews reduce discretion, compli-

cate interview preparation, and reduce rapport with applicants (Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Harris & Eder, 1999; Lievens & De Paepe, 2004). Such attitudes may partly be due to the way the label 'structure' is connotated (Bangerter et al., 2008). As such, interview forms labeled as 'behavioral' may not inherit the bad reputation of structured interviews. Moreover, some data suggest that employers consistently report high adoption rates when responding to the label 'behavioral' (Nancherla, 2008). For these reasons, we surmise that differences in labeling may have important consequences for the diffusion of structured interview content in the advice literature, and therefore suggest the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Mentions of 'structured' interviews in the advice literature will not increase over time.

Hypothesis 1b: Mentions of 'behavioral' interviews in the advice literature will increase over time.

A social representations approach also suggests that the content of a concept may get transformed during the course of diffusion, becoming more and more assimilated to preexisting schemes of thought. Therefore, if, as hypothesized above, structured interviews and behavioral interviews indeed diffuse differently, it may be because they are described according to different features in the advice literature. In describing structured interviews, academic psychologists tend to emphasize their psychometric advantages (e.g., job analysis, reliability, and validity). However, such arguments are often lost on practitioners who tend to evaluate personnel innovations according to a different frame of reference and using different terminology (Cascio, 1991; Johns, 1993; Shrivastava & Mitroff, 1984; Terpstra & Rozell, 1997). Practitioners often are indifferent to research support for an innovation, being more interested in whether it fits their managerial style (Simola et al., 2007) and its administrative implications (Johns, 1993). Practitioner interests correspond to a managerial approach that uses business terms. For instance, competency modeling often replaces job analysis (Simola et al., 2007), and validity and reliability are not important to practitioners (Herriot, 1993; Terpstra & Rozell, 1997), who prefer to talk about applicants' practical job experience (Singer & Bruhns, 1991) or links to organizational strategy (Latham, 2007). One reason why, as hypothesized above, 'behavioral' interviews may diffuse more than 'structured' interviews is that they are described according to features that are more attractive to practitioners. We therefore surmise that different features will be used to describe 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews in the advice literature, proposing the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: 'Structured' interviews will be described using more technical (psychometric) arguments than administrative (managerial) arguments.

Hypothesis 2b: 'Behavioral' interviews will be described using more administrative (managerial) arguments than technical (psychometric) arguments.

Finally, a social representations approach focuses attention on the intermediary actors that transmit scientific content in the mass media. These actors delve into expert knowledge with the intention of diffusing it to laypersons. They thus play a key role in the potential transformation of content, because (1) they may themselves have different understandings of expert concepts than the experts they cite; and (2) they are designing their message to fit their audience's knowledge (Clark & Murphy, 1982). This suggests that the authors of advice books for structured interviews may describe them differently from how academics would, depending on their background. Authors of advice books have very different backgrounds. Some are academics, but others may be consultants, HR professionals, or even journalists. These backgrounds may influence their knowledge about interviewing and thus what techniques they advise to use and how they describe these techniques. Authors with an academic background (e.g., university-based researchers, or at least authors with a PhD degree) are more likely to be familiar with research findings than authors without such a background (Cascio, 2007; Cohen, 2007). Therefore, because structured and behavioral interviews are research-based innovations, we expect authors with an academic background to mention both the labels 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews more frequently than authors without such a background.

Hypothesis 3a: Books with academic authors will describe 'structured' interviews more often than books with no academic authors.

Hypothesis 3b: Books with academic authors will describe 'behavioral' interviews more often than books with no academic authors.

3. Method

3.1. Sample

To constitute a representative sample of job interview advice books, we first searched for such literature on Amazon.com under 'interviewing,' leading to more than 1,200 hits. We removed books unrelated to selection interviews, books offering advice for specific jobs (e.g., flight attendants, Java programmers), multiple references to the same book or reeditions (keeping only the earliest version available), and books offering advice for applicants. To study potential long-term trends, we selected books from five periods; those published in 1990 or before, between 1991 and 1995, between 1995 and 2000, between 2001 and 2005, and in 2006 or after. We randomly ordered 100 advice books from these differ-

ent periods of time. Because of unforeseeable constraints on the availability of these books, our final sample contains 83 books, representing 23, 12, 20, 12, and 16 books for these five periods, respectively. Of these books, 68 were published in the United States, 13 in the United Kingdom, and 2 in Canada.

3.2. Coding

We analyzed the content of the books to evaluate how structured interviews and behavioral interviews were presented across time. The unit of analysis is the book itself. Because advice books often contain a large amount of information (e.g., several hundred pages), we first looked at the table of contents and the index to identify sections and chapters including potentially useful data. We generally focused on the sections about how interviews are organized, the types of interview techniques that can be used, or the questions that can be asked. For all variables coded, we double-coded all 83 books and assessed interrater agreement by computing Cohen's kappa statistic. Interrater agreement was generally acceptable to perfect (kappa statistics are reported below for each variable).

To test Hypotheses 1a and 1b, we coded whether or not terms related to 'structured' or 'behavioral' interviewing were mentioned. For 'structured' interviews, we coded whether the term was mentioned in the book or not (kappa = .83). The coding for 'behavioral' interviews was done in two steps because we discovered that some books presented behavioral questions (e.g., *tell me about a time when you had to deal with an angry client*) but did not describe them as behavioral questions and did not mention 'behavioral' interviews as a specific technique. We take this as interesting circumstantial evidence that behavioral questions have been in circulation before the advent of structured interviewing (and probably without their users' awareness of their potential psychometric merits). We thus decided to code the two cases independently to capture these different phenomena. Thus, we first coded 'behavioral' interviewing as present when the book described 'behavioral' interviewing as a specific technique and absent otherwise (including synonyms of 'behavioral,' such as 'behavior-based,' 'competency-based,' or 'situational'; kappa = .73). If 'behavioral' interviewing was not mentioned as a technique, we further checked for the presence or absence of behavioral questions (kappa = .65).

To test Hypotheses 2a and 2b, we coded the presence (1) or absence (0) of each of three keywords representing technical/psychometric arguments and three keywords representing administrative/managerial arguments in descriptions of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews. *Validity*, *reliability*, and *job analysis* were the technical keywords. They represent indicators of psychometric vocabulary (e.g., Herriot, 1993). *Competency*, *strategy*, and *practical job experience* were the administrative keywords. They represent indicators of managerial concerns relative to selection (Latham, 2007; Lievens & Sanchez, 2007; Simola et al., 2007). We added up the score for each set of keywords together to create a technical and an administrative score (ranging from 0 to 3) for each book presenting 'structured' interviews and each book presenting 'behavioral' interviews. (Kappas for each keyword range from .68 to 1.) We computed Cronbach's alpha using the upper bound of the phi coefficient, a method suggested when using dichotomous items (Sun et al., 2007), and obtained good levels of reliability ($\alpha = .88$ for the technical score and $\alpha = .91$ for the administrative score). To test Hypotheses 3a and 3b, we coded whether or not one of the authors was indicated as holding a PhD degree as judged from the cover or author biographical notes (kappa = .83).

4. Results

Because advice books were published in different countries, we first compared the presence of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews in books from North America (70 books) and the United Kingdom (13 books). 'Behavioral' interviews were discussed in 46% of books from both regions, $\chi^2(1, N = 83) = .01$, $p = .98$, and behavioral questions were discussed in 19% of North American books and 15% of UK books, $\chi^2(1, N = 83) = .08$, $p = .78$. But books published in the United Kingdom (62%) mentioned 'structured' interviews more often than North American ones (33%), $\chi^2(1, N = 83) = 3.85$, $p = .05$.

We used logistic regression to analyze the evolution of the presence of 'structured' interviews, 'behavioral' interviews, and behavioral questions across time. The three types of interviews/questions were entered as dependent variables in three different regression analyses, with the five categories of years of publication as a continuous independent variable and country where the book was published as a control variable. Results showed no effect of publication date and country on the presence of 'structured' interviews and behavioral questions. But we found an effect of publication date on the presence of 'behavioral' interviews, while country had no effect (Figure 1). Over time, 'structured' interviews are infrequently mentioned, with a stable proportion of 33–42% of advice books describing them, supporting Hypothesis 1a. The proportion of books describing 'behavioral' interviews increased over time from less than 10% before 1990 to more than 75% after 2000, $B = .869$, $SE = .202$, Wald $\chi^2(1, N = 83) = 18.484$, $p < .001$, supporting Hypothesis 1b[1].

Visual inspection of Figure 1 suggests that before 2000, a number of books described 'behavioral' interviews as a specific interview technique while others only offered examples of behavioral questions. After

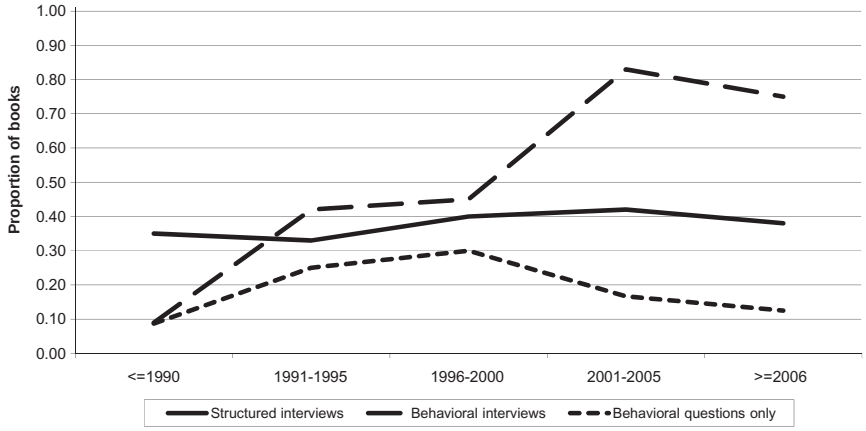

Figure 1. Mentions of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews and behavioral questions in advice books over time.

2000, the proportion of books only offering examples of behavioral questions declined while the proportion describing 'behavioral' interviews continued to increase. This may suggest that erstwhile mentions of behavioral questions became subsumed under the label of 'behavioral' interviewing as this technique became more widely diffused.

We used paired-sample *t*-tests to test Hypotheses 2a and 2b regarding the use of technical and administrative arguments to describe 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews. Results showed that technical/psychometric arguments ($M = .967$, $SD = 1.079$) were more frequent than administrative/managerial ones ($M = .387$, $SD = .715$) when describing 'structured' interviews, $t(30) = 3.153$, $p < .01$. Administrative arguments ($M = 1.184$, $SD = .982$) were more frequent than technical ones ($M = .421$, $SD = .683$) when describing 'behavioral' interviews, $t(37) = 4.476$, $p < .001$. These results support Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Conversely, we also used *t*-tests to compare the use of technical arguments to describe the two concepts and found that they were used significantly more often to describe 'structured' than 'behavioral' interviews, $t(67) = 2.556$, $p < .05$. We also tested the use of administrative arguments to describe the two concepts and found that they were significantly more used to describe 'behavioral' than 'structured' interviews, $t(67) = 3.824$, $p < .001$.

Finally, books for which at least one author held a PhD degree described 'structured' interviews more often than those that did not have any PhD holders as authors, providing support for Hypothesis 3a. Of the 37 books with authors holding a PhD degree, 21 (57%) mentioned 'structured' interviews, compared with only 10 of the 46 books without a PhD holder as author (22%), $\chi^2(1, N = 83) = 7.059$, $p < .001$. No significant difference was observed for 'behavioral' interviews, mentioned by 46% of books irrespective of whether authors included a PhD holder or not. Hypothesis 3b was therefore rejected. Interestingly, when describing 'structured' interviews, technical arguments were used more often in books with PhD holders as authors ($M = 1.238$, $SD = 1.091$) than books without them ($M = .400$, $SD = .843$), $t(29) = 2.137$, $p < .05$. There was no significant difference between these two categories regarding administrative arguments used to describe 'behavioral' interviews ($M = 1.471$, $SD = .943$ and $M = .952$, $SD = .973$, respectively, $t(36) = 1.654$, $p = .107$).

5. Discussion

In this study, we used the theory of social representations to better understand how structured interview techniques are diffused in popular media. We investigated mentions of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviewing in popular media over time, the arguments used to describe them, and the types of authors who describe them. This study extends Rynes et al.'s (2007) findings to structured interview techniques, with another medium (practitioner-oriented advice books instead of magazines), and with data from a longer period of time (two decades).

Through the process of anchoring (Wagner & Hayes, 2005), social representations theory suggests that scientific concepts are diffused in popular culture through mass media, and that different aspects of a concept may get selected out or amplified during this process (Wagner & Hayes, 2005). The multidimensional concept of interview structure (Chapman & Zweig, 2005), with its features regarding standardization and the use of behavioral questions (Campion et al., 1997), may diffuse to practitioners through interview advice books (Palmer et al., 1999). Survey results suggest that 'structured' interviewing may be negatively connotated by practitioners (e.g., Bangerter et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2008; Lievens & De Paepe, 2004) while 'behavioral' interviewing appar-

ently receives more support from them (Nancherla, 2008). Also, lack of familiarity or awareness may explain why staffing practices do not diffuse (Terpstra & Rozell, 1997). We found differences in the coverage of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviewing in the advice literature, showing that 'behavioral' interviews diffuse while 'structured' interviews do not. On the one hand, 'structured' interviewing is not a widely diffused concept in the practitioner-oriented advice literature. In the five periods of time assessed in this study, it was never present in more than 42% of advice books. Yet, we note that 'structured' interviews seem to diffuse more in the United Kingdom than in North America. On the other hand, 'behavioral' interviewing has increasingly diffused in the English-language advice literature, independently of the country of publication. After 2000, more than three quarters of books describe this concept, suggesting that it is well known in the industry. We also found that mentions of behavioral questions that did not refer to 'behavioral' interviewing as a technique seemed to decrease after 2000, possibly because they became subsumed under 'behavioral' interviewing.

Another example of anchoring we found was that different arguments were used to describe the concepts of 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews. Books tend to use technical or psychometric arguments to describe 'structured' interviews. For instance, Bell (1992, p. 75) explains that the 'examination of psychometric properties for hiring entry-level production employees reveals high interrater reliability and predictive validity, as well as evidence for test fairness and utility. In other words, structured interviewing works.' Similarly, P. C. Green (2007, p. 27) explains that 'some level of structure is essential for reliable measurement of a candidate's skills and valid prediction of performance.' Such arguments represent the traditional academic way to communicate the benefits of structured interviewing: Practitioners should adopt such techniques because of the overwhelming evidence regarding their validity and reliability. However, these technical arguments are not compelling to practitioners (Johns, 1993; Terpstra & Rozell, 1997), who are not trained to understand them (Cohen, 2007). Such arguments may lead practitioners to interpret structured interviews as something complex or abstract, explaining their negative attitudes toward them (Bangerter et al., 2008).

Conversely, books tend to describe 'behavioral' interviews using administrative or managerial arguments. For instance, Davila and Kursmark (2005, p. 14) explain that 'in behavior-based interviewing, each question is deliberately designed to obtain behavioral examples to assess the candidate's competence in a particular job-related area.' Similarly, Yeung (2008, p. 9) argues that 'by identifying and articulating the competencies that are necessary for each particular job, an interviewer can decide on appropriate questions to find the best person for the job.' Such arguments may be more easily accepted by practitioners because they are closer to the language of business (Latham, 2007). Practitioners may thus be more receptive to arguments linking structured interviewing to the notion of competencies.

Finally, social representations theory stresses the key role of intermediate actors (e.g., book authors) in the transmission and potential transformation of scientific knowledge. We supposed that authors with an academic background would be more likely to describe 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews than authors without such a background. Our results show that 'structured' interviews are indeed described more often in books written by authors with an academic background (i.e., PhDs) than in books written by nonacademic authors. Academic authors also use more technical arguments when describing 'structured' interviews than nonacademic authors. These results can be explained by differences in familiarity with research (Cascio, 2007) and because academics and practitioners weight psychometric evidence differently (Herriot, 1993). Academic authors are certainly more familiar with personnel selection findings, such as the large body of evidence regarding the good psychometric properties of structured interviews. Conversely, and contrary to our expectations, 'behavioral interviews' are equally and frequently mentioned in books written by academic and nonacademic authors. Furthermore, both types of authors used more administrative than technical arguments.

This study has some limitations. First, even if advice books are popular among practitioners (Palmer et al., 1999), it is unclear how many practitioners actually read them. Furthermore, practitioners also get information from other media sources, which may provide different advice than investigated here. Practitioner-oriented magazines (Rynes et al., 2002) and Web sites (Cohen, 2007) are two examples. Future studies may extend our study to magazine articles about selection interviews. Web sites may be more difficult to study over time because they are regularly updated. In addition, we argued that the lack of adoption of structured interview techniques may potentially be explained by their lack of diffusion in the advice literature. These books are seen as credible sources of knowledge by practitioners (Cohen, 2007). But we do not know how practitioners take advice into consideration when choosing how to conduct interviews. Future studies might explore this issue by investigating how practitioners react to advice books, what advice they remember after reading them, and to what extent they apply advice in practice. Finally, our study is based on a limited number of advice books in English. Our conclusions are thus limited to English-speaking countries, and similar literature in other languages may contain different advice. However, an analysis of advice books in French we conducted subsequently

to the main study yields similar results as with books inEnglish (i.e., increasing mention of 'behavioral' interviews only).[2]

Despite these limitations, our study has implications for expanding research on the academic–practitioner gap. Perhaps the most important contribution is the theory-driven approach we have presented based on social representations theory. The volume of publications on the academic–practitioner gap in management seems to be increasing. However, many of these publications constitute empirical studies or commentary. In the future, to make progress, it will be important to apply cutting-edge theories from fields of study specialized in investigating the links between science and everyday practice. A particular advantage of social representations theory is its focus on processes of diffusion rather than outcomes, and on the role of the media as an intermediary between science and practice.

Our results also have practical implications for bridging the academic–practitioner gap regarding structured interview techniques. Promoting higher levels of structure in interview practice constitutes a key challenge for personnel selection (e.g., Lievens & De Paepe, 2004). Our results suggest that accumulating additional evidence about the validity or reliability of structured interview techniques will probably not help further this endeavor. On the contrary, we believe that the solution will come from a closer collaboration between academics and practitioners (e.g., Klehe, 2004; Rynes, Bartunek, & Daft, 2001; Terpstra & Rozell, 1997). We further believe that academics need to rethink the way they communicate with practitioners. Our results showed that 'behavioral' interviews were described with more managerial arguments than 'structured' interviews. Therefore, we agree with Latham (2007) that academics should learn to communicate the advantages of evidence-based practices (e.g., structured and behavioral interviews) using practitioners' language.

In conclusion, diffusing structured interviewing practices may require academics to increase their participation in intermediate publications such as practitioner-oriented magazines, books, and Web sites (Guest, 2007). To do so, they may collaborate with partners who can help create material (e.g., books, Web site content) synthesizing evidence-based practices, such as structured interview techniques, that can be communicated to practitioners (Rynes, 2007). Only 46% of the books in our sample were written (or cowritten) by authors with a PhD degree. Increasing academics' participation in such joint ventures can help control the quality of information transmitted to practitioners and describe state-of-the-art information about best practices. If academics can describe structured interviewing using the right language, this may increase the chances that practitioners get exposed to arguments that will convince them to adopt these best practices.

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Notes

1. The space dedicated to describing 'structured' and 'behavioral' interviews in advice books was often limited. On average, the 31 books that described 'structured' interviews did so only on 2.6 pages ($SD = 2.9$, $Max = 10$). Similarly, the 38 books that described 'behavioral' interviews did so only on 3.6 pages on average ($SD = 4.3$, $Max = 22$).
2. We sampled 45 advice books for applicants (advice books for recruiters are rare in French) to replicate the findings relative to Hypotheses 1a and 1b. We compared the presence of both interview types in books published before and after 2000. Results showed no difference for 'structured' interviews (mentioned in none of books before 2000 and 12% after 2000), $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 2.35$, $p = .13$. But 'behavioral' interviews were mentioned more often after than before 2000 (58% vs. 21%), $\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 6.04$, $p = .01$.

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