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Looking in the Mirror: Including the Reflected Best Self Exercise in Management Curricula to Increase Students' Interview Self-Efficacy

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Abstract: Students often choose to pursue a business major during their post-secondary education to increase their chances of securing employment post-graduation. However, evidence suggests that many recent business degree graduates struggle with underemployment, highlighting the importance of examining how post-secondary institutions can better prepare students for the transition to work. In the current study, we investigated how including a personal strengths-driven intervention, the Reflected Best Self Exercise (RBSE), in management curricula may help better prepare students for securing employment by increasing students' confidence in their ability to succeed in an employment interview (i.e., by enhancing interview self-efficacy). Using a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design with a control group ($N=190$ undergraduate students), we found that the RBSE increased students' interview self-efficacy and that this effect was moderated by pre-test levels of general self-efficacy and career choice confidence. Moreover, we found that students with lower levels of general self-efficacy and career choice confidence experienced greater benefits from the RBSE. Our results contribute to the management education literature by demonstrating how strengths-based interventions with a reflection component can be leveraged to develop interview self-efficacy in business students.

Looking in the Mirror: Including the Reflected Best Self Exercise in Management Curricula to Increase Students' Interview Self-Efficacy

Many students gravitate towards business degrees for the promise of securing a high-paying job (Easterling & Smith, 2011). Despite the promise of enhancing future career prospects by earning a business degree and/or diploma, The New York Federal Reserve Bank (2021) reported that general business graduates face greater levels of underemployment compared to many of their peers. This is problematic since graduates who find themselves in substandard employment arrangements (i.e., in roles that do not allow them to use their skills and training from university) may experience persistent wage deficits (McKee-Ryan & Harvey, 2011; Verbruggen, van Emmerik, Van Gils, Meng, & de Grip, 2015), receive fewer opportunities from prospective employers (Nunley, Pugh, Romero, & Seals, 2017), and experience lower satisfaction and greater turnover intentions (Maynard & Parfyonova, 2013). As such, it is imperative for undergraduate business programs to better prepare students for obtaining desirable employment.

Concerns over the degree to which business schools prepare students to enter the workforce is not a new topic in the management education literature (e.g., Pfeffer & Fong, 2002), however, such conversations and corresponding research studies often center around the gap between the skills emphasized and taught in undergraduate management education and those required in the business world (e.g., Brink & Costigan, 2015; Edelman, Manolova, & Brush, 2008; Ritter, Small, Mortimer, & Doll, 2018; Sunley, Harding, & Jones, 2019). Although findings from these studies may contribute to the goal of producing graduates who have the skills required to succeed in their jobs once they are employed, students *must* successfully navigate the job market and secure employment *before* these skills can be applied. Supporting this conjecture, Loon (2021) recently called upon business schools to question whether they are effectively

preparing students to “hit the ground running” upon graduation (p. 197). Thus, equipping students with the skills needed to successfully join the workforce is also required.

A common obstacle that recent graduates must overcome to secure a job is effectively presenting their skills, strengths, past experiences, and educational achievements in an employment interview. Indeed, successfully completing employment interviews has been identified as a critical component of job search success (Saks, 2006). Unfortunately, survey results indicate that only 34% of undergraduate students¹ reported feeling that they have gained the skills required to conduct a successful employment interview (McGraw-Hill Education, 2018). Further, research focusing on marketing majors specifically, demonstrates that these students fail to sell themselves on the job market, and therefore, may lose out on job opportunities (e.g., Chonko & Roberts, 1996; Hopkins, Raymond, & Carlson, 2011). Concerns over the capabilities of business students to effectively present themselves on the job market also extend beyond marketing majors, with Woodbury et al. (2008) noting: “In the typical business curricula, students are taught to communicate and market goods and services. However, researchers believe business educators are less diligent in teaching them to market themselves” (p. 49). These sentiments are echoed by Addams and Allred (2015), who noted that business graduates often lack the confidence to express themselves well and highlight their skills in interviews.

One way in which post-secondary, and more specifically, management curricula can better prepare students to effectively conduct employment interviews is by enhancing their interview self-efficacy - defined as a candidate’s confidence in their interview capabilities (Tay, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006). Indeed, scholars have noted that internal factors (such as self-efficacy beliefs)

¹ 31% of those surveyed in this report were business majors.

are an important, yet overlooked aspect of interview performance (Huffcutt, 2011). Specifically, researchers have asserted that interview self-efficacy empowers individuals to tackle interview-related challenges and demonstrate persistent effort towards their goals in this domain, which in turn, promotes the deployment of effective behaviors during an interview (Tay et al., 2006).

Further, research indicates that candidates with higher interview anxiety (which is greater with lower levels of interview self-efficacy) typically receive lower interview scores, and subsequently, are not hired, even if they are qualified for the job (McCarthy & Goffin, 2004).

To date, research has examined several ways in which business curricula can boost students' confidence in performing employment interviews. For example, mock interviews, in which students conduct and practice interviews and receive feedback on their performance, have been positively linked to post-exercise interview confidence (Hansen, Oliphant, Oliphant, & Hansen, 2009; Marks & O'Connor, 2006). Likewise, other research has supported the positive effects of training interventions on interview self-efficacy, such as skill-based training interventions (Tross & Maurer, 2008) and verbal self-guidance training (Latham & Budworth, 2006). Although these findings highlight the effectiveness of mock interviews and training interventions, they are not without their faults. Mock interviews can be time consuming (Marks & O'Connor, 2006) and access to comprehensive training resources may be less feasible to include in university career development programs given the recent trend towards reduced spending on career services (Marcus, 2017). Moreover, mock interviews and training interventions are inherently performance focused, where an emphasis on answering questions "correctly" may overshadow other important components of interview success. For example, one study found that recruiters often complained about interviewees who "sounded over-rehearsed" and provided "rote responses," and instead, preferred candidates who expressed self-awareness

(Nicholas & Handley, 2020, p. 70). Indeed, interviewers typically have an idea of applicant skills and qualifications in advance of the interview, and instead are more interested in assessing fit with the organization (e.g., Judge, Cable, & Higgins, 2000). As a result, it is recommended that interviewees lead with a strengths-focused approach (Nicholas & Handley, 2020) and establish a connection between their unique characteristics and the needs of the organization (Schwartzberg, 2019). Taken together, the need to explore alternative means of enhancing interview self-efficacy in business students is clearly highlighted.

Accordingly, in our study we investigated how including a strengths-based intervention where individuals come to understand their best attributes and realize their ‘best selves,’ called the Reflected Best Self Exercise (RBSE; Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005), as part of management course curricula may better prepare students for successfully conducting employment interviews. The RBSE entails obtaining short narratives from close others that describe when the individual completing the RBSE demonstrated their best attributes and strengths (Quinn, Dutton, & Spreitzer, 2003). As such, it aims to enhance a person’s ability to recognize their best possible self, which would be valuable information that can increase a person’s confidence in their ability to leverage their strengths during an employment interview. Thus, we examined the following research question: To what extent does the RBSE help students build confidence around interviewing for jobs (i.e., interview self-efficacy) and how do general self-efficacy and career choice confidence moderate this relation? To answer this research question, we used a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design with a control group. Students in the experimental group completed the RBSE and wrote a reflection paper within which they discussed: a) how their best self-portrait can guide their future career path, b) what aspects of their best self are suited for their chosen (or to assist with choosing) future career, and c) how

they can draw upon different aspects of their best self to be successful in their future careers. We found that the RBSE enhanced students' interview self-efficacy and that this effect was greatest for students who possessed low levels general self-efficacy and career choice confidence.

By demonstrating the impact of the RBSE on interview self-efficacy, and the moderating roles of general self-efficacy and career choice confidence, we make several contributions. First, our research contributes to the management education literature by shedding light on how to better prepare students for obtaining employment. As previously noted, past research indicates that many business students struggle to effectively present the skills they obtained during their management education in an employment interview (e.g., Addams & Allred, 2015). Our study presents one type of intervention that can be incorporated into management curricula to achieve this goal. Specifically, we found that the RBSE positively impacted students' perceptions of their ability to succeed in an employment interview. This strengthens the case for including activities like the RBSE in management curricula to enhance career readiness and career management skills. Moreover, including the RBSE in management education answers recent calls in the literature (e.g., Loon, 2021) to present students with opportunities to reflect on their future careers and think about life after graduation.

Second, our results extend the literature on positive organizational scholarship, reflective learning, and career self-management. Indeed, scholars have noted the need for further inquiry into enriching learning environments in management education using the principles of positive organizational scholarship (Lavine, Carlsen, Spreitzer, Peterson, & Roberts, 2022). Of relevance to our research, a core aspect of positive organizational scholarship is developing strengths and capabilities (Dutton & Glynn, 2008). Our study demonstrates how a strengths-based intervention with a reflection component (i.e., the RBSE) can be used to enrich management curricula and

prepare students for future employment. Strengths development is a multistage effort, beginning with identification of strengths and leads to daily use (Hodges & Asplund, 2012). The reflection paper component of the RBSE enhances the self-knowledge gained by providing students with a concrete application of their best selves in an employment context. In other strengths development exercises (e.g., StrengthsFinder 2.0; Rath, 2007), a mentoring session with a coach or trainer typically follows strength identification to help guide the person to use their strengths in a way that will achieve personal or professional goals. Aligned with this notion, reflective learning posits that educational experiences must be solidified with deliberate and goal-focused reflection in order to reap the full benefits. Taken together, it is evident that reflective learning and the strengths-based approaches of positive organizational scholarship can work together to enhance the development and presentation of employee strengths at work. Further, although self-efficacy is central to the social cognitive model of career self-management, few studies have examined methods for enhancing self-efficacy in student populations (Lent, Ireland, Penn, Morris, & Sappington, 2017). Accordingly, we provide insight into the ways in which self-efficacy for career-specific tasks, such as interviewing, can be developed through the RBSE. Finally, our research leverages plasticity theory (Brockner, 1988) and career maturity theory (Super, 1990) to identify two relevant moderating variables for this exercise, namely general self-efficacy and career choice confidence, respectively. This line of inquiry contributes to our knowledge of who stands to benefit most from the RBSE and provides insight into how individual differences interact with career exercises.

In the following sections, we elaborate on the RBSE and describe the theoretical concepts relevant to the exercise. In particular, we draw on positive organizational scholarship, reflective learning theory, and the social cognitive model of career self-management to explain how the

strengths-based approach of the RBSE can be used to enhance interview self-efficacy in management students. Additionally, we describe how individual differences, such as general self-efficacy and career choice confidence, may interact with this exercise to strengthen the relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy. We then present a quasi-experimental study that was used to test, and ultimately was found to support, our main hypotheses. We conclude with a discussion of our main findings and their implications on management literature and the practice of management education.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Literature Review

The RBSE is a developmental exercise that is conducted in two stages: 1) creating a best self-portrait and 2) bringing one's best self to life (Quinn et al., 2003). In the first stage, participants collect short narratives from close others that describe when they demonstrated their best attributes and strengths and use them to create a best-self portrait (i.e., by creating statements constructed similarly to "When I am at my best I..."). This process of composing the reflected best self-portrait allows an individual to bring a mental representation of the person's best self into consciousness, and in turn, showcase that best self (Roberts, Spreitzer, et al., 2005). The second stage helps participants to create an action plan for showcasing their best self by describing how they will leverage their strengths in their daily lives. Research has shown that when individuals complete these two stages of the RBSE, they experience more positive emotions (e.g., joy, interest, hope, and gratitude) and feelings of empowerment and relational support (Spreitzer, Stephens, & Sweetman, 2009). They also have greater feelings of self-worth, are more resistant to stress and burnout, perform better under pressure, and have better relationships with their employers (Cable, Lee, Gino, & Staats, 2015; Lee, Gino, & Cable, 2016).

Further, and relevant to our research, it has been theorized that the conscious awareness of an individual's best self can enhance self-belief by expanding their perception of what is possible for themselves, facilitate positive personal expression, and inspire action that will bring their best selves to life (Roberts, Dutton, et al., 2005). Applying these theoretical concepts to business students transitioning to the workforce, we assert that by developing a clearer image of what their best self looks like through the RBSE, individuals will feel more confident expressing their best qualities to an interviewer.

To aid in our theorizing on the positive direct effect of the RBSE on interview self-efficacy, we synthesize literature from positive organizational scholarship, reflective learning practices, and organizational psychology, namely the social cognitive model of career self-management (CSM; Lent & Brown, 2013). Positive organizational scholarship focuses on human excellence and the processes that enable individuals to thrive (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). In line with these principles, strengths-based interventions, like the RBSE, enable individuals to realize their unique skills and talents so they can be used to achieve their goals (Quinlan, Swain, & Vella-Brodrick, 2012). In this way, when students know of their strengths, it can help unlock their potential in a variety of domains, including during employment interviews. Critically, simply becoming aware of our strengths may not be sufficient to inspire daily use. As such, the RBSE requires participants to develop an action plan to bring their best selves to life. This is in direct accordance with reflective learning theory, which suggests that to derive meaning and direction from an experience or event (e.g., realizing your strengths through the RBSE), purposeful processing of that experience is required (e.g., Boud, Keough, & Walker, 1985).

Finally, we draw upon the CSM model to help understand how students translate the

experience of learning about their strengths into career-relevant efficacy beliefs. The CSM model positions career-relevant self-efficacy as a central variable in the process of facilitating a person's own career development (Lent & Brown, 2013). Using principles of Bandura's social cognitive theory (1977), scholars have begun to investigate sources of self-efficacy in career-relevant contexts (termed *learning experiences* in the CSM model; e.g., Lent et al., 2017; Ireland & Lent, 2018). Learning experiences influence an individual's self-efficacy by providing social information regarding their capabilities. Following these insights from the CSM model, we argue that learning about and reflecting on their strengths through the RBSE exercise provides the social information that informs students' beliefs about their ability to perform in an interview (i.e., interview self-efficacy). Crucially, the CSM model is predicated on the notion that an individual is an active agent in their own development. Additionally, Bandura (1989) acknowledged that self-efficacy development is largely an internal process that requires active participation from the individual. Because the strengths-based narratives in the RBSE are collated across sources and examined for common themes, this promotes the self-driven reflection necessary for self-efficacy development.

The RBSE and Interview Self-Efficacy

In accordance with Bandura (1977), the CSM model (e.g., Lent et al., 2017) posits that learning experiences influence an individual's self-efficacy by providing social information regarding their capabilities. Therefore, the psychological process that connects learning experiences to self-efficacy beliefs is the conscious awareness that the individual already possesses the capabilities to succeed in the specified domain. In this way, learning experiences (or sources of self-efficacy) and discovering one's strengths both involve a cognitive process whereby the individual engages in a self-appraisal and, consequently, extends this knowledge to

their perceptions of their capabilities. This is aligned with the strengths-based approach in positive organizational scholarship, which posits that becoming aware of one's unique skills and talents affects the self-concept and changes the way the individual views and approaches different situations and contexts in front of them (Asplund & Blacksmith, 2012).

The effectiveness of the RBSE to promote interview self-efficacy is also supported by its focus on self-reflection and active participation from individuals themselves. A critical step in reflective learning is the linking of key learnings to future action (Boud et al., 1985; Hedberg, 2009). Accordingly, participants in this study were required to write a reflection paper linking their best selves to their future careers. Past research has supported the effectiveness of adding writing exercises to career choice interventions (e.g., Brown et al., 2003), providing further evidence for the effectiveness of this approach. Taken together, the guidance provided by the RBSE, and subsequent reflection paper can serve to translate the feedback individuals receive into efficacy beliefs.

In coming to know and appreciate the best versions of themselves, participants will feel increased confidence in their ability to leverage their strengths in relevant employment contexts, such as the employment interview. A best self-portrait may be especially valuable in an interview context because interviewees are tasked with presenting the best versions of themselves. Additionally, through the RBSE, individuals must examine the content from the narrative stories to produce concrete examples of when they used these strengths (Roberts, Dutton, et al., 2005), which may prove useful for enhancing feelings of preparedness to answer interview questions. That is, becoming aware of one's best attributes and how they apply to the work context can spark confidence for conducting interviews because students feel better able to "sell themselves" to a future employer. Further, when students reflect upon how they can use

their strengths in their future careers in the reflection paper, individuals will likely feel more confident in their ability to prepare for interviews and answer common interview questions, such as “What value would you bring to the role/organization?” Thus, the RBSE helps individuals understand their strengths and how these apply to their future careers, which they can then draw on to better answer interview questions about how they might respond to job demands and why they might be ideally suited for the job they are interviewing for. As such, we hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 1.** The RBSE will have a positive direct effect on interview self-efficacy.*

The Moderating Role of General Self-Efficacy

Although efficacy beliefs were originally conceived as being situation-specific, Bandura (1997) later acknowledged the generalizability of powerful mastery experiences across contexts, leading scholars to conceive of self-efficacy as something that can be state-like and context-dependent (i.e., task-specific self-efficacy; Bandura, 1977; 1986) or global and trait-like (i.e., general self-efficacy; e.g., Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). General self-efficacy reflects an overall feeling of confidence that one can succeed in a variety of endeavours (e.g., Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998; Shelton, 1990). This general feeling of competence is dispositional and stable (i.e., it is unlikely to be influenced by interventions such as the RBSE) and thought to be most potent in unfamiliar situations where one cannot rely on prior successful experiences (Tipton & Worthington, 1984). Moreover, research has demonstrated that new job seekers draw on a general sense of self efficacy to bolster feelings of confidence toward the job search process (i.e., job search self-efficacy; Petruzzello, Mariani, Chiesa, & Giglielmi, 2020). Given that general self-efficacy may be an important individual difference factor in determining who is likely to approach new career challenges with confidence despite not having prior experience, we examine it as a moderator in the relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy.

The need to examine general self-efficacy as a moderating variable is supported by Brockner's (1988) plasticity theory of behavior, which describes how personal factors may cause an individual to be more easily influenced by their external environment. Specifically, individuals who are low in general self-efficacy will be more susceptible to environmental influence and social cues (i.e., "plastic") compared to individuals with higher levels of general self-efficacy. Given that individuals who are low in general self-efficacy lack confidence in their overall competence levels, they may be prone to seek external validation of their behaviors, and thus, be more strongly influenced by social reinforcement about their competence than those high in general self-efficacy (Brockner, 1988). Past research has found that individuals with lower levels of general self-efficacy are more likely to benefit from a variety of professional development interventions, including e-mentoring (DiRenzo, Linnehan, Shao, & Rosenberg, 2010), reemployment interventions (Eden & Aviram, 1993), and personal growth initiatives (van Woerkom & Myers, 2019). Thus, because individuals with low general self-efficacy are theorized to be more 'plastic' than those with high levels, engaging in an exercise such as the RBSE may be especially beneficial for bolstering their self-belief in their interview capabilities. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 2.** Individuals' general self-efficacy will moderate the relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy, such that individuals with lower general self-efficacy will demonstrate a greater increase in interview self-efficacy than individuals who have higher general self-efficacy.*

The Moderating Role of Career Choice Confidence

Making career choices is an important developmental milestone for students (Super, Savickas, & Super, 1996), however, not all university students are equally certain of their career path. Of relevance to our research, individuals who are not confident in their ability to make appropriate career decisions and occupational choices (i.e., individuals low in *career choice*

confidence; Savickas & Porfeli, 2011), may experience career inhibition as they struggle with the self-belief that they can tackle career related challenges (Savickas, 2005). It follows that individuals who are lower in career choice confidence stand to benefit a great deal from career interventions that can help them to build a greater understanding of their capabilities, such as the RBSE. Accordingly, we examine career choice confidence as an additional moderator of the relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy.

Career choice confidence is rooted in career maturity theory (Super, 1957; 1990). According to this theory, greater career choice confidence reflects mature career development. Research has shown that weaker career choice confidence is associated with external attributions for career success (Janeiro et al., 2014), meaning that these individuals believe their accomplishments are due to circumstantial factors (e.g., receiving help from others; Weiner, 1985). Given this tendency to exhibit an external attribution style, individuals with lower levels of career choice confidence may derive increased benefits from the strengths-based approach of the RBSE. That is, because such individuals believe that uncontrollable factors have caused past successes, participating in an exercise that identifies their unique strengths can help them to tie their own personal attributes to the examples given by story tellers. Further, the increased focus on external information for career-related events may make such individuals more prone to interventions generally (Janeiro et al., 2014). Thus, the RBSE may be particularly useful for developing interview self-efficacy for individuals who have lower career choice confidence, as such individuals are more likely to attribute their successes to external factors. We therefore hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3. *Individuals' career choice confidence will moderate the relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy, such that individuals with lower career confidence will demonstrate a greater increase in interview self-efficacy than individuals who have higher career confidence.*

METHOD

Design and Participants

Using a convenience sampling approach, we conducted a pre-test/post-test quasi-experimental design with a control group on a sample of upper-level undergraduate management students enrolled in two separate courses taught by the second author. Students ($M_{age}=21.51$, $SD=1.11$, 61.9% female) in the experimental group were enrolled in a course (henceforth the experimental course) that took place in the Winter semesters of 2017 and 2018. In this experimental course, students were required to complete the RBSE, and subsequently, write a reflection paper (see the section titled Intervention: The RBSE for more details on this paper). Student papers were evaluated by the instructor as they were part of the experimental course's assessment methods. Students ($M_{age}=20.72$, $SD=1.14$, 73.1% female) in the control group were enrolled in a separate undergraduate course (henceforth the control course) that took place in the Fall semesters of 2016 and 2017. The control course did not include the RBSE or related paper as part of its assessment methods, however, both courses were roughly equivalent in terms of their business focus and difficulty.

To measure the moderating and outcome variables, students in both the experimental and control courses were required to complete two surveys consisting of the same measures at the beginning of the academic semester (i.e., the pre-test) and then again nine weeks later at the end of the semester (i.e., the post-test). At the end of the second questionnaire, students were asked if they would like to submit their anonymous responses for research purposes. Although students were required to complete both surveys (i.e., completing each survey was worth 1% of the students' overall course grade), submitting their data for research purposes was voluntary. 78% of the students who completed both surveys in each the experimental and control course chose to

submit their data for research purposes. Each survey included an attention check question, which instructed participants to select a certain response (e.g., “Please select strongly agree”). After deleting data from participants who failed attention checks, there were a total of 190 valid survey responses ($n=97$ for the experimental group; $n=93$ for the control group). Students in both courses were not aware of the true purpose of this study and did not know that the research surveys were linked to the RBSE. Students in the experimental course handed in their RBSE paper one day before the second survey was made available to them.

Intervention: The RBSE

As outlined by Roberts and colleagues (2005; see also Roberts, Spreitzer, et al., 2005), the RBSE involves completing a series of sequential steps that are outlined in a document² obtainable from the Center for Positive Organizations³. Although it varies, typically the RBSE is completed over the course of several weeks. First, individuals identify and contact (usually through email) close others (e.g., family members, friends, co-workers, etc.) from whom they wish to obtain stories. Individuals instruct these close others to write a story about a time when the participant demonstrated strengths, positive attributes and values, and overall, exemplified their best self (e.g., a storyteller might describe a time the student helped the storyteller get through a difficult situation). Individuals also write descriptive stories about themselves. In our study, students obtained stories from 2-3⁴ close others and they wrote two stories about

² The RBSE is now run through a computer program administered by the Center for Positive Organizations in which instructions are provided and stories are managed. At the time of data collection, the computer program was not available, but otherwise the current RBSE activities and intervention is unchanged from our use.

³ The Center for Positive Organizations’ website can be found at <https://positiveorgs.bus.umich.edu/cpo-tools/rbse/>

⁴ Typically, the RBSE recommends stories from 10 storytellers be obtained so that participants have enough data to identify patterns across stories. Given the time constraints of the course (i.e., the course spanned a 12-week period) along with respecting what is deemed an appropriate workload for undergraduate students, obtaining stories from 10 storytellers was not feasible in the context of this research. Instead, it was deemed appropriate that stories from 2-3 storytellers be obtained. It is important to note that students did not indicate any issues with having insufficient data from which to identify patterns across stories.

themselves. Second, once stories are collated, the individual identifies common patterns (e.g., reoccurring behaviors) and themes (e.g., reoccurring personality characteristics, values and/or beliefs) across the stories and organizes them into a table, within which each pattern and theme is tied to specific examples from the stories. The third step entails writing a best self-portrait⁵, in which the patterns (e.g., helping behavior), themes (e.g., altruism) and examples are integrated into a three-four paragraph narrative (Roberts, Spreitzer, et al., 2005; Spreitzer, Stephens, & Sweetman, 2009). In our use of the RBSE, students were also required to complete a RBSE reflection paper within which they outlined how they completed the exercise (e.g., from whom they obtained stories, how they analyzed the stories) and presented their best self-portrait. Students were also required to write about: a) how their best self-portrait can guide their future career path, b) what aspects of their best self are suited for their chosen future career (or will assist with choosing a future career), and c) how they can draw upon different aspects of their best self to be successful in their future careers.

Measures

Interview self-efficacy. We used Tay et al.'s (2006) measure of job interviewing self-efficacy. Students responded to the five-item scale by indicating their level of confidence related to different aspects of conducting an interview (e.g., "How confident are you that you can market your skills and abilities during a job interview?") on a scale of 1 (*not at all confident*) to 5 (*very confident*). Cronbach's α was $\alpha_{pretest-control}=.93$; $\alpha_{pretest-experimental}=.94$; $\alpha_{post-test-control}=.94$; $\alpha_{post-test-experimental}=.95$.

General self-efficacy. Students completed Sherer and colleagues' (1982) 17-item self-

⁵A sample of a completed best-self portrait is included in the Centre for Positive Organization's RBSE Interpretation Guide. Interested readers can obtain the Interpretation Guide by contacting the Centre for Positive Organization at: info@reflectedbestselfexercise.com

efficacy measure on a scale of 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item includes “When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work”. This scale demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha_{pretest-control}=.89$; $\alpha_{pretest-experimental}=.89$; $\alpha_{post-test-control}=.87$; $\alpha_{post-test-experimental}=.90$).

Career choice confidence. We used the career choice confidence sub-scale of the revised Career Maturity Inventory (Savickas & Porfeli, 2011). Six items were rated in terms of agreement (1= *strongly disagree*; 5= *strongly agree*). A sample item includes “I keep changing my occupational choice” (reverse-coded). Cronbach’s α was $\alpha_{pretest-control}=.81$; $\alpha_{pretest-experimental}=.80$; $\alpha_{post-test-control}=.81$; $\alpha_{post-test-experimental}=.82$).

Analytical Procedure

We used a multi-step analytical procedure to address this study’s research questions. We first explored the construct validity and discriminant validity of the general self-efficacy, career confidence, and interview self-efficacy measures. Specifically, confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) tested whether the three-factor model (one factor for each of interview self-efficacy, general self-efficacy, career confidence) demonstrated optimal fit as compared to alternative models with fewer factors. We conducted these analyses separately across the pre- and post-test data. Next, we investigated measurement invariance of the focal variables across pre- and post-test assessments, as well as across conditions. Invariance testing ensures unbiased cross-group and cross-time comparisons (Ployhart & Vandenberg, 2010; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). Four levels of invariance testing are needed: configural invariance (baseline model), metric invariance (respective factor loadings constrained to equality), scalar invariance (respective item intercepts constrained to equality), and strict invariance (respective residual variances constrained to equality). We implemented these constraints across conditions and pre-test and post-test assessments simultaneously. Fit of the configural model was assessed using typical guidelines for the comparative fit index (CFI) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), with

values $>.95$ and $<.05$, respectively, representative of adequate fit. Nonsignificant changes in the model χ^2 and $\Delta CFI <.010$ and/or $\Delta RMSEA <.015$ between models (i.e., configural to metric invariance models, etc.; Chen, 2007) are supportive of invariance. Support for invariance does not suggest that individuals' interview self-efficacy, for example, does not change over time (or in response to the RBSE), but suggests that the construct was assessed with relatively consistent precision across conditions and time, enabling meaningful inferences.

To examine discriminant validity and measurement invariance, item parcels (i.e., variables comprising two or more items averaged together) were used. Parcels enable analyzing more parsimonious models and have a more favorable ratio of sample size to free parameters, which can be advantageous in small samples (Williams, Vandenberg, & Edwards, 2009). Item parcels can also have higher reliability and better distributional properties (Little, Rhemtulla, Gibson, & Schoemann, 2013). Three item parcels were formed for each construct by assigning items to each parcel in a balanced manner (Little et al., 2013).

Finally, we set up two path models, one for each moderator, with condition as the predictor, interview self-efficacy as the outcome, and pre-test general self-efficacy and career choice confidence, respectively, as moderators. We used the observed scale scores for each variable but corrected for unreliability using Cronbach's α and the observed sample variances (i.e., single-indicator latent variables). Additionally, in these models we used the latent moderated structural equation method (Klein & Moosbrugger, 2000). Hsiao et al. (2018; 2021) recommended this approach when estimating moderation models to balance model complexity, statistical power, and the need to account for unreliability. To isolate the effect of the RBSE, in the model with general self-efficacy (pre-test) as the moderator, we controlled for post-test general self-efficacy as well as pre-test interview self-efficacy. Likewise, in the model with

career confidence (pre-test) as the moderator, we controlled for post-test career confidence and pre-test interview self-efficacy. Figure 1 presents a diagram of the models. We also used the Johnson-Neyman technique to probe the regions of significance for each interaction (see Lin, 2020). All CFA and SEM analyses used *Mplus* 8.5 and its robust maximum likelihood estimator (MLR; Muthén & Muthén, 2020), which accounts for non-normality.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

RESULTS

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics and correlations of our focal variables across the control and experimental conditions.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Model fit indices from the CFAs for discriminant validity are shown in Table 2. Using common guidelines (see Analytical Procedure), the three-factor model was deemed optimal, and demonstrated reasonably strong fit in both the pre-test assessment, $\chi^2(24) = 39.77, p = .02$, CFI = .99, and RMSEA = .06 and post-test assessment, $\chi^2(24) = 38.04, p = .03$, CFI = .99, and RMSEA = .06. Moreover, the three-factor model was significantly better (i.e., $p < .001$) than any alternative model with fewer factors (i.e., a two-factor model that specified a single factor for all general self-efficacy and interview self-efficacy indicators, which were the two most highly correlated variables at both time points; see Table 2).

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

We next assessed the measurement invariance of the general self-efficacy, career choice

confidence, and interview self-efficacy variables across conditions and pre-test/post-test assessments. These results provided support for the configural, metric, scalar, and strict invariance for each variable (see Table 3). Configural invariance was supported with $\chi^2(222) = 298.09$, $p < .01$, CFI = .97, and RMSEA = .06. With adequate support for the baseline, configural invariance model, respective factor loadings were constrained to equality to assess metric invariance. Metric invariance was also supported, with $\Delta\chi^2(21) = 20.03$, $p = .52$, $\Delta\text{CFI} < .0004$ and $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = -.003$. Thus, metric invariance, and the equality of the factor loadings was supported, suggesting that each of the three measures functioned equivalently across conditions and pre-test/post-test assessments.

 INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

Applying respective equality constraints on respective indicator means, as in scalar invariance, provided further evidence for invariance. Specifically, $\Delta\chi^2(21) = 19.83$, $p = .53$, $\Delta\text{CFI} = .001$ and $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = -.002$. Thus, scalar invariance did not reduce model fit, providing support for invariance. Additionally, equality constraints on respective residual variances did not further degrade model fit, $\Delta\chi^2(27) = 18.52$, $p = .89$, $\Delta\text{CFI} = .004$ and $\Delta\text{RMSEA} = -.007$. Together, providing support for configural, metric, scalar, and strict invariance underscores the psychometric properties of the general self-efficacy, career choice confidence, and interview self-efficacy measures across RBSE conditions and across pre-test and post-test assessments, and enables our subsequent and more focal model to test our hypotheses.

 INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Table 4 presents the results for both path models with general self-efficacy (top panel) and

career choice confidence (bottom panel). In the model with general self-efficacy, the RBSE added to prediction of interview self-efficacy, $b = .17$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$.⁶ Therefore, Hypothesis 1 received support. In line with our expectations, the interaction between condition and pre-test levels of general self-efficacy was significant, $b = -.32$, $SE = .15$, $p < .05$. By including the interaction, the change in the proportion of variance accounted for in interview self-efficacy was $\Delta R^2 = .01$, $p < .01$. Although this effect appears as somewhat modest, Aguinis (2004) suggested even small incremental effects of interactions can have considerable practical importance and are worthy of serious consideration. Crucially, the nature of the interaction was also aligned with our expectations: lower levels of pre-intervention general self-efficacy increased the strength of the relation between the effect of the RBSE and post-test interview self-efficacy. Figure 2 shows the Johnson-Neyman plot of this interaction, showing that as levels of general self-efficacy decrease, the strength of the relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy increases. Also given in Figure 2 is the ‘region of significance’, showing that values of .08 or less on general self-efficacy (as a centered variable) were associated with a significant *positive* relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy (see dotted vertical line). Thus Hypothesis 2 was supported: the RBSE had a stronger effect for individuals who had lower general self-efficacy.

 INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Turning to the moderating role of career choice confidence (Table 4; bottom panel), as with the model for general self-efficacy, the RBSE added to the prediction of interview self-

⁶ In effort to best permit future meta-analytic synthesis of our results, we also present effect sizes for the RBSE on interview self-efficacy, calculated using Morris’ (2008) approach. This revealed an estimate of $d_{ppc2} = .21$. Additionally, we estimated effect sizes based on the standardized path coefficients, and using Orth et al.’s (in press) benchmark values (.03 = small, .07 = moderate, .12 = large effect) the effect of RBSE on interview self-efficacy is in the moderate-to-large effect size range: $B = .10$, $SE = .04$, $p = .03$ for the model with general self-efficacy, and $B = .11$, $SE = .05$, $p = .02$ for the model with career choice confidence.

efficacy, $b = .20$, $SE = .08$, $p < .05$, further supporting Hypothesis 1. The interaction between RBSE and pre-test career confidence was significant, $b = -.42$, $SE = .14$, $p < .01$, and resulted in $\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$. This suggests that the interaction accounted for an additional 3% of variance in interview self-efficacy, which can have considerable practical importance (see Aguinis, 2004). As in the general self-efficacy interaction, the nature of the career choice confidence interaction indicated that lower career choice confidence increased the relation between the RBSE and post-test interview self-efficacy. Figure 3 provides the Johnson-Neyman plot of this interaction, where its region of significance shows that at values of .13 or less (see dotted vertical line) on pre-test levels of career choice confidence (centered), the relation between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy was significant and positive. Accordingly, in support of Hypothesis 3, the RBSE had a stronger effect on interview self-efficacy for individuals with low career choice confidence.

INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

DISCUSSION

Considerable research attention has been given to skills-based additions to management curriculum to provide students with the tools for success in the workforce (e.g., Ritter et al., 2018; Sunley et al., 2019), however, past research has also indicated that many business students may struggle to effectively present these skills in an interview context (e.g., Addams & Allred, 2015), contributing to pervasive doubts regarding the degree to which business programs prepare their students to “hit the ground running” (Loon, 2021, p. 197). Accordingly, we investigated how the RBSE, a strengths-based narrative intervention, can help business students realize their best selves and bolster students’ beliefs in their abilities to effectively conduct an employment interview. The results of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of the RBSE for enhancing

interview self-efficacy. Additionally, we found that individuals with lower levels of general self-efficacy and career confidence experienced greater benefits.

Theoretical Implications

Overall, the results of our research demonstrated the efficacy of using a strengths-based intervention with a reflection component in preparing students for their future careers. This is a divergence from the skill-building approach often deployed in management education (e.g., Brink & Costigan, 2015; Edelman et al., 2008; Ritter, et al., 2019), and indicates that building a sense of self and understanding how to apply it to career challenges is an equally viable means of building interview self-efficacy. That is, our study showed the importance of self-knowledge and self-reflection in preparing students for their future careers. In a similar vein, our work contributes to the management education literature by answering calls to include more opportunities for reflection on future careers prior to graduation (e.g., Loon, 2021). Thus, by examining the effectiveness of the RBSE for building students' interview self-efficacy, the current research informs our understanding of how business courses can achieve the goal of developing graduates who have the confidence and ability to cope with challenges after graduation.

We also contribute theoretically to several bodies of literature. First, our findings contribute to the literature on career self-management by enhancing our understanding of how we can enhance self-efficacy for career-relevant tasks, as called for by Lent and colleagues (2017). Self-efficacy is the linchpin of the CSM model, yet research has primarily focused on outcomes of high self-efficacy (Lent et al., 2017). Further, previous research using the CSM model to investigate the sources of self-efficacy information has been conducted using self-report data, whereby individuals rate the degree to which they have experienced certain efficacy

building experiences in the past (e.g., Ireland & Lent, 2018). Although informative, such studies have not directly examined how these self-reported experiences become efficacy beliefs. Our research extends this line of inquiry by helping to identify how university students may translate efficacy information into efficacy beliefs. Specifically, our research highlights the role of developing self-awareness of one's strengths *and* reflecting on how these strengths can be leveraged in their future career endeavours in the development of interview self-efficacy.

Second, we extend the literature on positive organizational scholarship and reflective learning by demonstrating how the intersection of these literatures can help us to better prepare business students for the world of work. Specifically, the paper in which students reflected on how they could leverage their best selves in their future careers enabled participants to connect the self-awareness gained through the RBSE to their career goals. Put another way, the RBSE enables students to develop a clearer sense of their unique strengths and capabilities and the reflection activity provides the direction needed to build confidence in applying these strengths in relevant career contexts (e.g., in an interview setting). This 'sense-making' process is critical for deriving the full benefits of the learning process, as outlined by reflective learning theories (e.g., Boud et al., 1985). Indeed, in previous research, reflection has been highlighted as a potentially adaptive learning strategy for students in their early careers (Loon, 2021). Our research extends these findings and demonstrates the application of reflective learning theory, in conjunction with strengths-based approaches, to interview self-efficacy development in management students.

Third, our specific findings regarding the moderating roles of general self-efficacy and career choice confidence offers insight into the variables that impact the strength of the RBSE intervention. Previous research has examined the content and source of the narratives as

moderators of the effectiveness of the RBSE (Spreitzer et al., 2009), however, the extent to which the personal characteristics of the participant influence their experience with the RBSE has not been previously investigated. In support of plasticity theory (Brockner, 1988), we found that individuals with lower levels of general self-efficacy benefitted more from the RBSE compared to individuals with higher levels of general self-efficacy. Individuals lower in general self-efficacy are less self-assured, and therefore, are more prone to search their external environment for validation. As such, the RBSE was likely salient for these individuals because the information given by story writers provided them with the validation and encouragement they need. Further, individuals with high levels of general self-efficacy tend to approach most situations with confidence and determination (e.g., Shelton, 1990). It follows that having higher general self-efficacy indicates at least some degree of conscious awareness of one's strengths and capabilities, perhaps making the narrative strengths-based feedback less salient for the purpose of developing interview self-efficacy. We also found support for our predictions regarding the moderating role of career choice confidence. Participants who harboured doubts about their ability to choose an appropriate occupation and make sound career decisions (i.e., low career choice confidence) benefitted the most from the RBSE. Individuals with lower levels of career choice confidence are prone to making external causal attributions to career success (Janeiro et al., 2014), which may limit their beliefs that they are in control of their future careers. As such, the RBSE likely benefitted these individuals more by providing them with an avenue for realizing their internal strengths, thereby helping to bolster confidence in their ability to apply these skills successfully in an interview setting. Taken together, these findings highlight the need to identify relevant characteristics of the individual that affect how they engage with the RBSE and other similar exercises, as the failure to do so may lead to the inappropriate or incomplete

interpretation of any observed effects.

Practical Implications

We found that the RBSE helps individuals develop confidence about their interviewing skills. As such, our results strengthen the case for including the RBSE as part of management curricula for the purpose of enhancing career readiness. Traditionally, management communication courses have relied on mock interviews to enhance interview confidence and build interviewing skills (e.g., Marks & O'Connor, 2006). However, the RBSE takes a different approach by helping students appreciate their strengths and how to use them to build confidence around preparing for and performing in job interviews. This divergence from a more rehearsed approach offered by mock interviews may be a welcome one, as recruiters prefer candidates who demonstrate authenticity and self-awareness rather than overly practiced responses (Nicholas & Handley, 2020). As such, not only do our findings offer unique insight into our understanding of how interview self-efficacy can be developed in business students, but our methods also align with the qualities desired by those who will be interviewing them.

Strengths-based interventions, such as the RBSE, aim to help an individual identify their strengths and how to use those strengths in a way that supports their goals, whatever those may be (Quinlan et al., 2012). The versatility of the RBSE enhances the practical utility of this exercise, allowing it to be adopted and adapted in a variety of contexts. In our study, we demonstrated how this exercise could be used in a classroom by building it into the course curriculum. This exercise may also be effectively included as a career counseling service in undergraduate institutions. In this way, students will not only receive the benefits of completing the exercise, but they can also receive one-on-one guidance for how to apply their best self in the immediate future. The RBSE also has the potential to be adopted in workplace settings as part of

organizational and leadership development efforts. At the individual level, the results of the RBSE can be used to facilitate job crafting or role-redesign (Roberts, Spreitzer, et al., 2005), whereby employees think about how to tailor their in-role behaviors to capitalize on their strengths. This approach can also be applied to leadership development efforts by helping leaders aspire to become better versions of themselves and put their best self into action in their role (e.g., Jennings, Lanai, Koopman, & McNamara, 2022). Further, at the organizational level, individuals' best self-portrait and subsequent action plan can act as a tool to facilitate better coaching conversations in the context of career development. Finally, a best self-portrait can be updated as new experiences are accumulated and used to bolster self-efficacy throughout one's career. Doing so may act as an alternative to performance appraisals that can reveal information about job-based strengths individuals may draw upon for career development purposes. This is aligned with contemporary thinking that suggests organizations move away from traditional evaluations and toward performance management (e.g., Adler et al., 2016).

Based on findings offered by this study, incorporating the RBSE in management education addresses concerns regarding the degree to which undergraduate business education prepares students for the transition to the workforce (e.g., Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Loon, 2021). It is both necessary and desirable for management scholars to continue to critically evaluate the degree to which management curricula supports the acquisition of work-relevant skills (e.g., Brink & Costigan, 2015). However, it is the ability to adapt, improvise, and stay the course in the face of setbacks that characterizes the successful navigation of the early career stage (Loon, 2021). As such, it is valuable for students to learn about their unique strengths and capabilities (which is achieved through the RBSE) that can help them overcome common career obstacles, such as employment interviews. Moreover, given the fast-changing landscape of the business world, and

the trend towards “boundaryless” careers, it is likely that career self-management will continue to gain importance as a necessary inclusion within management curricula (Bunch, 2020). Our findings support this notion and demonstrate one useful application of the career self-management concept in a management course.

Finally, the results of our moderation analyses can have implications for policy development. As the RBSE was most effective for participants with lower levels of pre-test general self-efficacy and pre-test career choice confidence, organizations and career counselling services wishing to use the RBSE for the purpose of building interview self-efficacy might consider measuring these variables in advance. In this way, the RBSE can be used more purposefully by providing it to those individuals that may benefit from it the most. It should be noted, however, that since we found a main effect for the impact of the RBSE on interview self-efficacy, the exercise is still useful for enhancing interview self-efficacy among all participants.

Limitations and Future Research

There are a few limitations inherent in this research. First, we relied entirely on self-report data. Future research should use external measures of interview performance to determine whether the RBSE positively impacts individuals’ ability to successfully perform job interviews in addition to their efficacious beliefs that they can effectively do so. As self-efficacy for specific tasks is theorized to promote goal-setting and motivated action (Bandura, 1977; 1986), it follows that individuals who have enhanced interview self-efficacy will seek out opportunities to advance their interview skills, and therefore, perform better. This pathway from the RBSE to interview self-efficacy to skill building actions to interview success would also be a fruitful area for future research and would help to assess the longevity of the RBSE’s effects. Second, the generalizability of our findings to other student (i.e., beyond management students) and non-

student (e.g., unemployed working adults) samples remains an open question. Given the versatility of the RBSE, we believe the results from our study generalize directly to business school students, but also more broadly to all senior students in post-secondary education who are preparing themselves for employment upon graduation. As such, we recommend this as a future research topic. Third, given time constraints (i.e., 12 weeks) of the course in which the RBSE was completed, along with being mindful of an appropriate workload for this type of course, students obtained stories from only 2-3 storytellers. Typically, the RBSE uses stories obtained from 10 storytellers so that participants can readily identify patterns across stories. We don't believe this is a critical issue as students did not voice any concerns about an inability to identify patterns across stories. We would, therefore, expect the effects of the RBSE found in the current research to be conservative, and would have been greater if stories were obtained from additional storytellers, as this would likely make the effects of the exercise more salient. Nevertheless, we encourage future research to require participants to obtain stories from the recommended 10 storytellers. In a similar vein, participants only completed Phase 1 of the RBSE. In Phase 2, participants use their best self-portrait to think about their career goals and create an action plan to help them achieve these goals. Although participants in our study discussed how they could leverage their best self in their future careers, formally developing an action plan is a much more directed exercise. The magnitude of our effects likely would have been stronger had students completed both phases. Finally, we acknowledge the small direct effect of the RBSE on interview self-efficacy as a limitation. A small effect size, however, does not always indicate a trivial contribution, particularly when the intervention changes the way we think about a phenomenon (Cortina & Landis, 2009; Prentice & Miller, 1992). In our case, we introduce a strengths-based alternative to more traditional skill-building workshops in management curricula

to help prepare students for their future careers. In line with this conjecture, we firmly believe that our finding regarding the direct effect of the RBSE on interview self-efficacy, while small, is important to our understanding of how university curricula may enhance students' preparedness for employment interviews.

Other areas for future research also arise from our study. First, given the prevalence and detrimental effects of interview anxiety (Goffin & McCarthy, 2004), examining the role of the RBSE in mitigating anxiety around interviews would be a promising avenue for future research. Specifically, the reduction of interview anxiety may act as a mediating mechanism between the RBSE and interview self-efficacy and performance. Second, although we chose interview self-efficacy in part because of its conceptual overlap with the RBSE exercise, the RBSE likely has the potential to influence other types of self-efficacy. Thus, future research could examine the effects of the RBSE on job search self-efficacy to assess whether it enhances confidence for navigating the job market more generally.

CONCLUSION

Scholars and organizations have questioned the degree to which management education prepares students for success in the workforce. Specifically, research suggests that business students often fail to communicate their skills and capabilities effectively and may rely on overly rehearsed answers in job interviews. Despite the abundance of skills-based interventions and mock interview workshops offered as remedies to these concerns, business majors' difficulties with self-marketing highlights the necessity of additional means that increase students' ability to successfully conduct employment interviews. We investigated the efficacy of one such intervention, the Reflected Best Self Exercise, for enhancing students' confidence in their ability to perform well in an interview. The results of the study show that the RBSE is an effective tool,

particularly for individuals with low levels of general self-efficacy and career choice confidence.

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TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrix

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Condition	.51	.50	--						
<i>Pre-test</i>									
2. General Self-Efficacy	3.60	.55	.01	--					
3. Career Confidence	2.77	.79	.03	.27**	--				
4. Interview Self-Efficacy	3.37	.90	.02	.50**	.12	--			
<i>Post-test</i>									
5. General Self-Efficacy	3.60	.54	.06	.75**	.22**	.44**	--		
6. Career Confidence	2.80	.79	.02	.16*	.72**	.09	.21**	--	
7. Interview Self-Efficacy	3.44	.90	.13	.47**	.11	.78**	.52**	.13	--

Note. $n=190$. Condition: 0=Control group, 1=Experimental group.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

TABLE 2
Discriminant Validity Confirmatory Factor Analyses

	χ^2	χ^2_c	<i>df</i>	#fp	CFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2 df$
<i>Pre-test</i>								
Three-factor	39.77*	1.01	24	30	.99	.06	--	--
Two-factor	283.66**	0.98	26	28	.75	.23	337.60**	2
One-factor	493.46**	0.97	27	27	.54	.30	649.82**	3
							327.80**	1
<i>Post-test</i>								
Three-factor	38.04*	1.09	24	30	.99	.06	--	--
Two-factor	241.83**	1.08	26	28	.78	.21	229.35**	2
One-factor	438.02**	1.08	27	27	.59	.28	437.07**	3
							202.69**	1

Note. χ^2_c = scaling correction factor for χ^2 ; *df* = degrees of freedom; #fp = number of parameters; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; $\Delta\chi^2$ = Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 difference statistic (Satorra & Bentler, 2001); $\Delta\chi^2 df$ = degrees of freedom for $\Delta\chi^2$. Results for the Two-factor models combined the general self-efficacy and interview self-efficacy factors, as these were the most highly correlated variables (see Table 1), all other Two-factor models fit significantly worse. In the row for the Two-factor model, the $\Delta\chi^2$ and $\Delta\chi^2 df$ columns reflect the nested model comparison against the Three-factor model. For the One-factor model the top $\Delta\chi^2$ and $\Delta\chi^2 df$ values present the comparison against the Three-factor model and the comparison against the Two-factor model (bottom).

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

TABLE 3
Measurement Invariance Analyses

	χ^2	χ^2_c	<i>df</i>	# <i>fp</i>	CFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta\chi^2$ <i>df</i>	Δ CFI	Δ RMSEA
Configural	298.09*	1.00	222	156	.972	.060	--	--	--	--
Metric	319.05*	0.99	243	135	.972	.057	20.03	21	< .0004	-.003
Scalar	338.83*	0.99	264	114	.973	.055	19.83	21	.001	-.002
Strict	354.92*	1.00	291	87	.977	.048	18.52	27	.004	-.007

Note. χ^2_c = scaling correction factor for χ^2 ; *df* = degrees of freedom; #*fp* = number of parameters estimated in each model; CFI = comparative fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; $\Delta\chi^2$ = Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 difference statistic (Satorra & Bentler, 2001); $\Delta\chi^2$ *df* = degrees of freedom for Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2$; Δ CFI and Δ RMSEA = change in CFI and RMSEA estimates, respectively, between successive invariance models.

**p* < .01.

TABLE 4
Path Analysis Results

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI LL	95% CI UL	β
<i>Model 1: General Self-Efficacy</i>					
Pre-test Interview Self-Efficacy ^a	.77**	.07	.63	.91	.75
Post-test General Self-Efficacy ^a	.62**	.20	.28	1.07	.38
Condition	.17*	.08	.02	.32	.10
Pre-test General Self-Efficacy	-.23	.25	-.71	.26	-.13
Condition \times Pre-test General Self-Efficacy Interaction	-.32*	.15	-.61	-.03	-.10
<i>Model 2: Career Confidence</i>					
Pre-test Interview Self-Efficacy ^a	.83**	.06	.72	.94	.81
Post-test Career Confidence ^a	.25	.18	-.10	.61	.20
Condition	.20*	.08	.04	.35	.11
Pre-test Career Confidence	.02	.20	-.38	.42	.01
Condition \times Pre-test Career Confidence Interaction	-.42**	.14	-.69	-.15	-.17

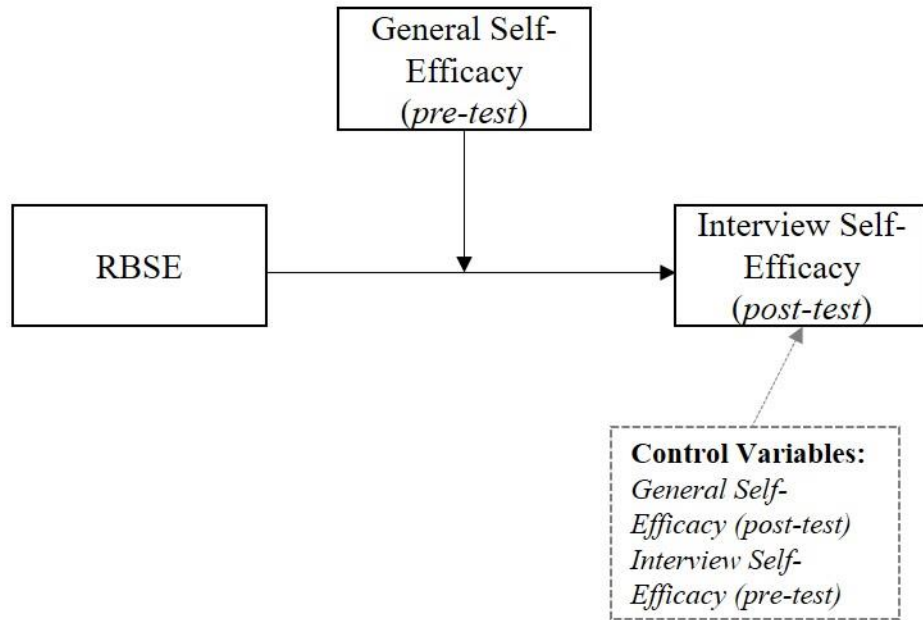
Note. 95% CI=95% confidence interval; LL=lower limit, UL=upper limit; β = standardized coefficient.

^a control variables

* *p* < .05; ** *p* < .01.

FIGURE 1
Path Diagram for Moderation Models

Panel A



Panel B

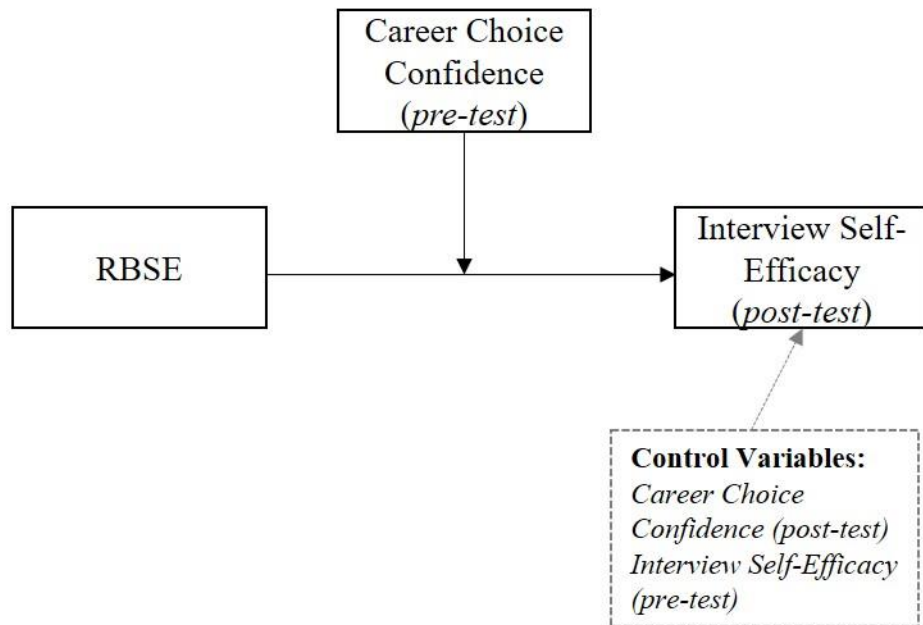
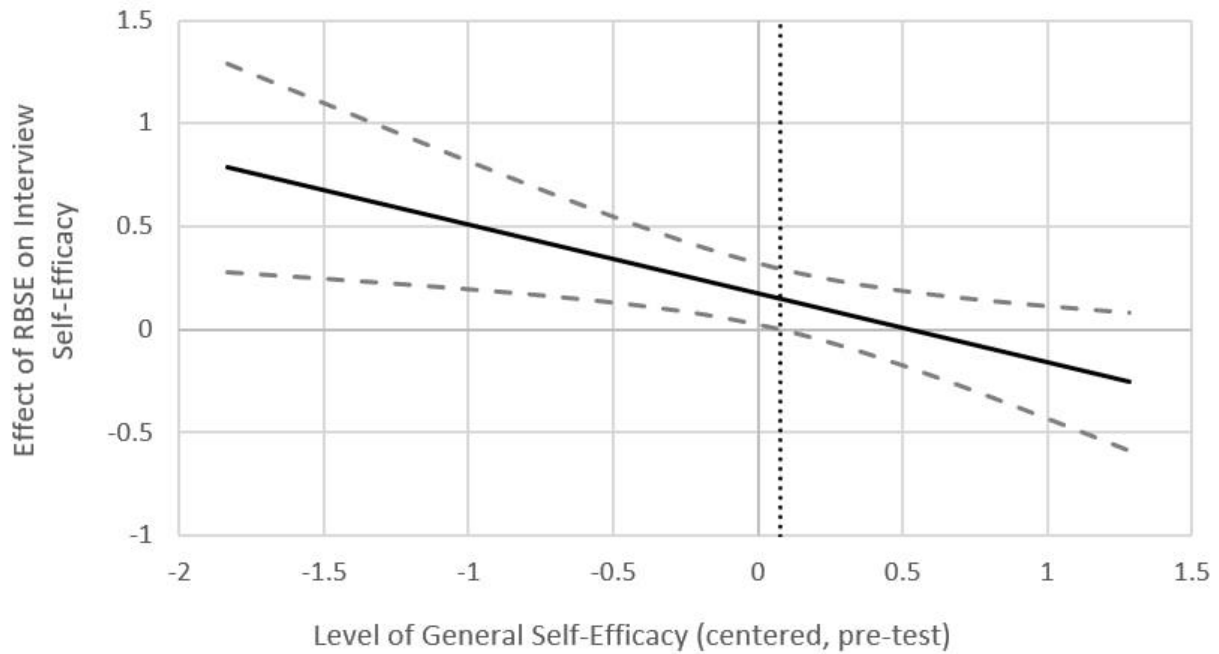


FIGURE 2

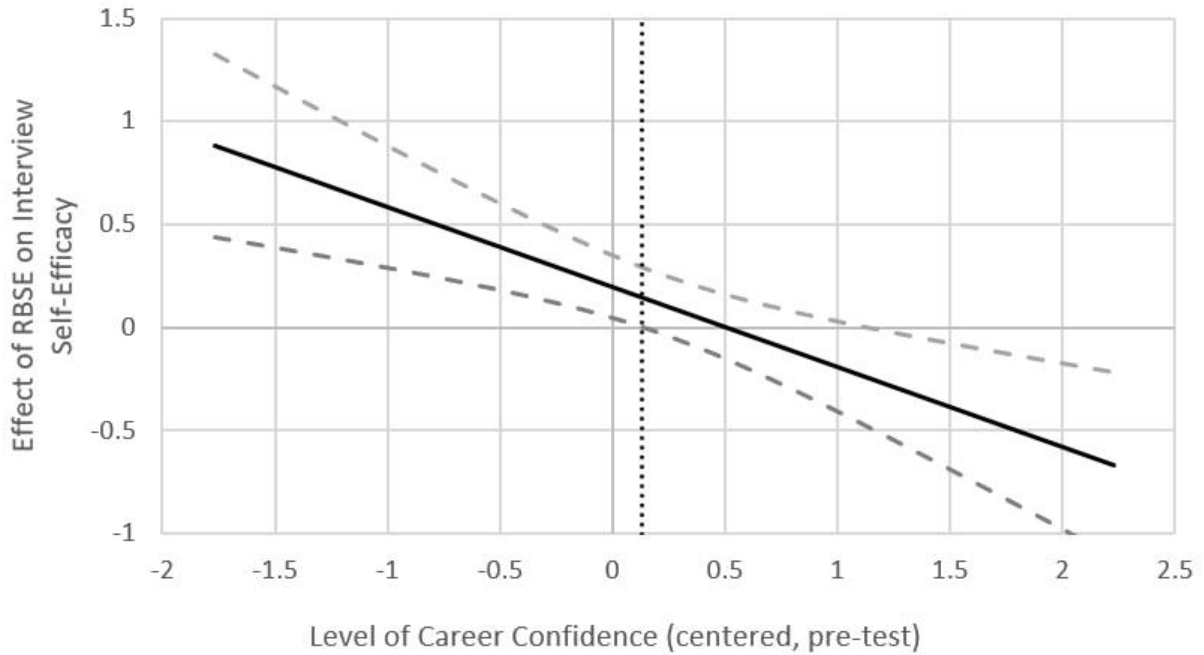
Johnson-Neyman Plot of Interaction Between RBSE and General Self-Efficacy on Interview Self-Efficacy



Note: Solid black line gives effect of RBSE on interview self-efficacy across range of (centered) general self-efficacy levels. 95% confidence intervals given in dashed grey lines. Dotted vertical line at general self-efficacy = .08 represents region of significance, with lower general self-efficacy associated with a significant RBSE-interview self-efficacy relation at $p < .05$.

FIGURE 3

Johnson-Neyman Plot of Interaction Between RBSE and Career Choice Confidence on Interview Self-Efficacy



Note: Solid black line gives effect of RBSE on interview self-efficacy across range of (centered) career choice confidence levels. 95% confidence intervals given in dashed grey lines. Dotted vertical line at career confidence = .13 represents region of significance, with lower career choice confidence associated with a significant RBSE-interview self-efficacy relation at $p < .05$.