

## **Rater error bias training in the employment interview and racioethnicity biased perceptions**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Interviewer training in general is an important area of research that has great research potential, since selecting and hiring the most qualified employees is at the root of effective organizations. This study utilizes regression analysis to examine a rater error bias interviewer training program as a tool for reducing Hispanic racioethnicity biased perceptions in the employment interview. The interviewer training manipulation used in this research was not effective, and one potential reason is the duration of the training program. Although training did not directly influence the interviewer's perceptions of applicant characteristics, training was significantly correlated with prejudice. Specifically, training was associated with a decrease in prejudice against Hispanics ( $r = -.20$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Efforts at training employees to rate applicants based on qualifications and social skills and not irrelevant individual differences should continue. Interviewer training such as rater error bias training has the potential to greatly improve the effectiveness of the interviewer decision making process. Suggestions for future interviewer training research are provided.

Keywords: Employment Interview, Training, Racioethnicity, Rater Error Bias, Prejudice

## INTRODUCTION

It is known that the interview situation allows various biases to affect hiring decisions (Segrest-Purkiss, Perrewe, Gillespie, Mayes, & Ferris, 2006), and due to the tremendous costs involved in hiring unqualified candidates, it would be expected that most interviewers would now receive extensive training before being allowed to conduct employment interviews. Nevertheless, most interviewers still do not receive much training, if any at all, before being allowed to conduct employment interviews (Chapman & Zweig, 2005; Kennedy, 1994). Over 20 years ago, Campion and Arvey (1989, p.72) stated that “Virtually nothing is known regarding whether interviewer bias can be reduced or eliminated via training procedures,” and researchers continue to point to the need for increased interviewer training in order to reduce bias (Highhouse, 2008; Palmer, Campion, & Green; 1999; Segrest-Purkiss et al, 2006). Interviewing is still the most widely used selection tool in existence; however interviewers are expected to know how to properly conduct an interview with little or no training (Chapman & Zweig, 2005). Due to the potential importance of the effects of interviewer training, and the lack of research in this area, this study examines the effectiveness of interviewer training on perceptions of applicants.

## EMPLOYMENT INTERVIEWER TRAINING

Researchers have indicated that formal interviewer training enables interviewers to evaluate candidates more effectively (e.g., Day & Sulsky, 1995; Dougherty, Ebert, Callender, 1986) and to develop the recruiting function of the interview (Chapman & Rowe, 2002; Rynes, 1989). The research on interviewer training that does exist has been mixed with regards to the effectiveness of interviewer training in improving interview outcomes (see Posthuma, Morgeson, & Campion, 2002 for detailed reviews). Research has examined applicant reactions to structured interviews and perceptions of procedural justice (Campion, Palmer, & Campion, 1997; Chapman & Zweig, 2005). However, structuring interviews, training interviewers in the structured interviewer process and examining applicant reactions to the interview process does not directly address the subtle and subconscious biases of interviewers that can affect the interviewer decision regardless of the degree of structure in the interview. The recent bestseller, “Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking,” did bring attention to the public regarding the extraordinary strength, subtlety, and insidious power of the subconscious decision-making process (Gladwell, 2005).

Researchers continue to emphasize the importance of properly training employment interviewers, yet practicing managers still neglect this area of training due to time and monetary constraints and perhaps due to an overconfidence in intuition regarding “fit” in the employment interview decision-making process (Highhouse, 2008; Kristof-Borwn, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Chapman and Zweig’s (2005) field study found that less than 34% of the 592 interviewers in their study had any formal interviewer training. Nevertheless the interviewers were confident they could choose the best candidate for the position regardless of the degree of interview structure (i.e. higher structure focused on following sophisticated questions for selection purposes versus lower structure focused on rapport building for recruitment purposes) (Chapman & Zweig, 2005). Of the 32% of interviewers who received training in Chapman and Zweig’s (2005), only 50-55% of the interviewers received training on how to avoid rating errors. Other content areas of employment interviewer training included the following 15 areas (Campion et

al., 1997; Chapman & Zweig, 2005): practice role playing; how to use questions that were prepared previously; note taking; job analysis; recruiting the candidate (promoting the organization); how to avoid rating errors; realistic job previews; and electronic role playing with feedback.

Several researchers have noted the gap in interviewer training research and the lack of interviewer training in corporations and have made calls for increased research efforts in the area (Arvey & Campion, 1982; Campion & Arvey, 1989; Dipboye, 1992; Dipboye & Gaugler, 1993; Dreher & Sackett, 1983). A meta-analysis performed by Conway, Jako, and Goodman, (1995) provided evidence for increased reliabilities of interviewer ratings when some form of interviewer training was used. Another study indicated that trained interviewers might be better able to recognize self-promotion behaviors, allowing for more objective hiring decisions (Howard & Ferris, 1996).

Still there is little empirical research on the effects of training upon various interviewer behaviors (Gatewood, Lahiff, Deter, & Hargrove, 1989). Gatewood et al., (1989) did perform two studies that empirically examined interviewer training. In the first study, differences between trained and untrained interviewers in evaluating applicant acceptability were examined. Trained interviewers consisted of individuals who indicated they had received formal training from different organizations. This training varied widely and ranged from a one hour training session using audiotapes to three days of seminars. The finding of no significant differences in type of information used to evaluate the job candidate could be due to the wide variance in the nature of the training programs, but sufficient information was not available for further analyses.

The second study by Gatewood et al., (1989) manipulated three different types of training programs: a human relations approach that emphasized a positive, comfortable interview climate and self-disclosure and rapport building; a behavioral descriptive approach that focused on developing questions of the appropriate breadth and depth; and the rating error approach that focused on valuing individual differences and avoiding halo effect, initial impression, central tendency, and recency effect errors. Three different dependent variables were examined: differential reactions of interviewees to the interviewer, differential manners of conducting the interview, and differential manners in which interviewers evaluated interviewees. Results indicated that only the rating error approach had a measurable effect and only on the dependent variable of how the interview was conducted. Due to these results, which emphasize the benefits of the rating error approach, as well as the design of this study, which precludes examining issues such as differential reactions of interviewees to the interviewer and differential manners of conducting the interview, this study focuses on rating error training.

In the Gatewood et al., (1989) study, there was no evidence that interviewer rating error training resulted in differences in the manner in which the interviewer evaluated the job applicant, although, this may have been due to the fact that an appropriate opportunity was not given for the interviewer to utilize any new knowledge gained from the rating error training. Specifically, the situation was arranged so that the two interviewees were basically equivalent. Perhaps neither of these applicants had a characteristic such as differential ethnicity or accent that would stand out and therefore lead to potential halo effects. This suggests that given the appropriate situation or opportunity, rater error training may indeed lead to differential evaluation of applicants such that the trained interviewers would evaluate applicants in a more discriminating manner avoiding rating errors such as the halo effect.

Both the interviewer and the interviewee contribute to the impressions formed during the interview. Interviewer training is examined in this study in an effort to see whether it can reduce any negative effects of ethnicity bias. Specifically, rater error interviewer training as related to this study, can be defined as trying to increase the awareness of ethnicity biases and lessen the effects of such biases on interviewer hiring decisions through the administration of a program to the interviewers that incorporates learning principles such as active participation, knowledge of results, and practice (Latham & Wexley, 1981). As mentioned previously, it is known that the interview situation allows various biases to affect hire decisions, and even though corporations face significant losses from hiring unqualified candidates, most interviewers still do not receive extensive training before being allowed to conduct employment interviews, even though this in-depth interview training is highly recommended (Kennedy, 1994). It has been suggested that civil actions related to discriminatory personnel decisions will continue to increase and the employment interview will be further invalidated as the work force becomes increasingly multicultural (Kennedy, 1994).

In the past, researchers examining performance appraisals have demonstrated the effectiveness of training in reducing rating errors such as halo, leniency, contrast, and first impression errors (Fay & Latham, 1982; Pulakos, 1984), and these results are probably applicable to other situations where ratings are used, such as selection procedures. Early work specifically related to interviewer training also has demonstrated the effectiveness of interviewer training (Latham, Wexley, & Purcell, 1975; Spool, 1978). It has been suggested that workshops, that include definitions, graphic illustrations and examples, active practice, feedback on ratings, and group discussions, are particularly effective when training individuals to avoid or overcome errors (Arvey & Campion, 1982; Bernardin, 1978). Latham et al., (1975) suggested that raters try to look for variance in ratee performance on different dimensions and not to form a global impression.

A key component of rater error training is the necessity of interviewers to recognize individual differences among interviewees (Gatewood et al., 1989). Factors such as type of interview (structured versus unstructured) (Heneman, 1975) and type of rating scales (behavioral versus graphic scale ratings) (Vance, Kuhnert, & Farr, 1978) have been examined in relation to interviewer rating error training. Interestingly, no interview research related to attitudes toward specific individual differences in conjunction with the effectiveness of rater error training has been identified. This research attempts to fill this void by examining the effectiveness of interviewer rater error training in relationship to attitudes toward racioethnicity.

## **RACIOETHNICITY**

Research on biases against minority applicants continues to be relatively neglected in management literature, although work force diversity is an increasingly important issue (Lau & Murnighan, 1998; Sanchez & Brock, 1996). In particular, past interview research has neglected Hispanic applicants relative to other minority applicants (Lin, Dobbins, & Farh, 1992), even though this segment of the population is growing rapidly in the U. S. (Sanchez & Brock, 1996; United States Department of Labor, 1988).

Although race and ethnicity have often been used interchangeably, some researchers have argued for a clear distinction between the concepts of race and ethnicity (Atkinson, Morton, &

Sue, 1983; Slavin, Rainer, McCreary, & Gowda, 1991). Race has been defined as a social grouping based on visible physical characteristics such as skin color and on supposed common ancestral origins (Slavin et al., 1991). On the other hand, ethnicity has been defined as a group's cultural and social heritage that has been transferred through generations of group members (Slavin et al., 1991). For example, regarding race, most African Americans share certain racial features that are traceable to the sub-Saharan part of the African continent. However, Hispanics are not necessarily racially similar, being of Caucasian, Indigenous, African, Asian, or mixed descent, but they are likely to share certain ethnic and language similarities (Rodriguez, 1997).

There has often been confusion over the meanings of words such as Hispanic, Latino, Chicano, and American (Sabelli, 1997). The term "Hispanic," which actually means "Spanish-speaking," was manufactured by the U.S. census bureau as an umbrella term that includes a variety of races and cultures including those of Italian and Jewish descent whose families spent only one generation in Latin America and both immigrants and those born in the U.S. (Sabelli, 1997; Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). Hispanic is often used interchangeably with "Latino" the indigenous term, however, originally the terms Latin and Latino derived from the Italian Latium referred to Italians and later to all subjects of the Roman Empire (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). Chicano, on the other hand, refers to Mexican-Americans (Noriega, 1997). Preferences over the appropriate term vary widely. Finally, to many U. S. citizens, the term American means born in the U. S.; yet, to most Latin Americans, the term refers to all people that are born in the Western Hemisphere (Sabelli, 1997).

The combination of both physical or racial differences and cultural or ethnic heritage has been referred to as racioethnicity (Cox & Nkomo, 1993; Roberson & Block, 2001). Research and the U.S. government in the past decade recognized five distinct racial groups: White or Caucasian, Black or African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans (Richard, 2000). Interestingly, the recent 2010 United States Census recognized the Hispanic or Latino identity or ethnicity category separately from 15 different, detailed racial categories (i.e., White; Black, African American, or Negro; American Indian or Alaskan Native; Asian Indian; Japanese; Chinese; Korean; Guamanian or Chamorro; Filipino; Vietnamese; Samoan; Other Asian; and Other Pacific Islander).

All of these conceptions of racioethnicity are socially constructed, and this has occurred throughout human history (Blanton, 1987; Nkomo, 1992). Some psychoevolutionary theories on social affiliation (Sauerland & Hammerl, 2008) and theories of racioethnic stratification suggest that biological tendencies have predisposed people by their basic desire for survival and protection of kinship groups, toward ethnocentric and racist behaviors (Gordon, 1978; van den Berghe, 1981).

Organizational research has examined multiple dimensions of racioethnicity utilizing terms including physioethnicity or race (physical or biological differences) and ethnicity or ethnic identity (cultural identification) (Phinney, 1990; Sanchez & Fernandez, 1996), whereas other researchers have delineated the ethnicity concept to include socioethnicity (social upbringing), and psychoethnicity (psychological classification of self) (Birman, 1994; Fine, 1995; Friday, Moss, & Friday, 2004; Friday, Friday, & Moss, 2004).

The different conceptions of race and ethnicity are obviously complex (see Phinney, 1990 for a review, or Friday et al., 2004 a, b for an in-depth examination of the multiple dimensions of racioethnicity). For the purposes of this paper, we combine the aforementioned general concepts of race (physical differences) and ethnicity (cultural differences), and refer to them as "racioethnicity." In this article, Anglo ethnicity is used to refer to Caucasians or Whites (not of

Hispanic origin). The term “Hispanics” is used to refer to individuals who identify or are identified with the Hispanic (of Spanish speaking origins) culture.

The first impression and halo rater effects are expected to be related to variations in racioethnicity, because ethnicity often serves as an easily recognizable cue to group membership from which first impressions are made and from which inferences regarding individual characteristics such as intelligence are made (Lippi-Green, 1997; Ryan, Carranza, & Moffie, 1977). If effective, one would expect interviewer training to reduce bias against non-Anglo candidates. Thus, the following is expected:

**Hypothesis 1:** Interviewers who receive the training will have more positive perceptions of the Hispanic applicant than interviewers who do not receive the training.

## METHOD

### Subjects

The sample for the study was comprised of 212 students enrolled in a basic management course at a College of Business at a large Southeastern university. The students participated voluntarily for extra credit. Demographic information was collected from the subjects on gender, age, work experience, ethnicity, major, and grade point average.

The sample was composed of approximately 56% men and 44% women. The mean age of the subjects was 22 with a range from 18 to 47 years of age. The total work experience average for the subjects, including full- and part-time work experience, ranged from no work experience to 31 years, and the average total work experience was 2.7 years. The ethnicity composition of the sample was as follows: 66% Caucasian/ White (not of Hispanic origin); 18% African American/ Black; 11% Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina; 0% Native American; 4% Asian/ Pacific Islander; and 1% Other. Subject ethnicity was used as a control variable and was coded into the following categories for analysis: 66% Caucasian/ White, not of Hispanic origin (coded as 0) and 34% Other (coded as 1) which included African American, Hispanic, Native American, Asian/ Pacific Islander and Other. Business majors accounted for 83% of the sample, while the remaining 17% were non-business majors. The grade point averages ranged from 2.0 to 4.0 with an average of 3.0. As expected, due to the fact that the data were collected from students, only 10% of the sample had any experience with formal interviewer training. This limited exposure to formal interviewer training during past work experience helped prevent interference with the training manipulation that was administered to approximately 41% of the sample.

Although generalizability when using students has been considered a problem by some researchers (Gordon, Slade, & Schmitt, 1986; Guion, 1983), Bar and Hitt (1986) concluded that results are similar when using students as subjects, as opposed to employees, on issues related to applicants' ethnicity in interview decisions. This seems quite plausible considering that the effect of ethnicity has been argued to be mediated by universal and tenacious cognitions of ethnic-based stereotypes (Singer & Eder, 1989). Additionally by using students, there should be less interference from previous interviewer training experiences, due to the fact that undergraduate students generally have less work experience.

## PROCEDURE

An application with an overview of the procedure and an informed consent form was completed for the Human Subjects Committee. The data were collected during controlled laboratory conditions. The study proceeded according to the following five steps.

In step 1, two large (115 and 150 students) entry-level organizational behavior classes were selected to participate in the experiment. One of the classes was exposed to the rater error training one week before viewing the interview videos. This group was not told that the training was part of an experiment. Instead the training was disguised as a part of the routine class activities. The training included definitions, illustrations and examples, active participation in a rater error quiz, feedback on these ratings, and group discussion. In order to maximize subject participation, all portions of the experiment were held during the scheduled 50-minute class time. One week before viewing the interview videos, both classes were informed of the 6-point extra credit opportunity by the respective instructor both orally and through email sent to the class members.

In step 2, groups of randomly assigned subjects reported to separate rooms that were prearranged with the appropriate video and application materials. The subjects encountered one of the following videotaped interview conditions: the Hispanic or Anglo candidate. The subjects signed the sign-in sheet for extra credit purposes and the informed consent form was administered to the subjects.

In step 3, the subjects were given the job description and the appropriate resume with the ethnicity manipulation (Miguel Fernandez or Michael Fredrickson), and they were given time to read the application materials. The job description for the Human Resource Manager was adapted from the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (U. S. Department of Labor, 1991). Subjects were instructed to imagine that they were hiring for the human resources manager position and to visualize themselves actually interviewing the video applicant. The subjects were instructed that they could take notes during the interview, and blank space was available on the survey for note taking.

In step 4, they watched the videotaped job interview that included the racioethnicity manipulation. At this point, the subjects were exposed to the ethnicity manipulation indicated by the applicant name several times. The applicant name was included once on the resume, the name appeared once on the introductory screen of the video, and the name was mentioned twice at the beginning of the videotaped interview dialogue. The introductory screen read as follows: *Human Resource Manager Applicant: Michael Fredrickson (Miguel Fernandez)*. This screen appeared in white lettering with a black background, and remained on the screen for several seconds. This insured maximum exposure to the ethnicity manipulation.

In step 5, the subjects responded to the survey questions. Items related to the following were included in the first part of the survey: the applicant's perceived characteristics, demographics on the subjects, as well as demographics on the video job applicant. After this information was completed and returned to the administrator, the subjects completed the second part of the survey that included the ethnicity prejudice scale questions. This survey was given separately in order to conceal the nature of the study in order to prevent interference with other survey questions.

## MEASURES

### Model Variables

**Applicant racioethnicity.** The racioethnicity was manipulated in the videos as discussed previously. Subjects were either exposed to the Hispanic applicant (coded 1, Miguel), or the subjects were exposed to the Anglo applicant (coded 0, Michael).

**Training.** Two large sections of the same undergraduate management course were the subjects for this study. One class (N = 87) was exposed to the interviewer rater error training during their scheduled class time, while the other class (N = 125) was not.

**Interviewer's perceptions of applicant characteristics.** Subjects' perceptions regarding the interviewee's disposition were assessed by having the subjects rate applicants on 26 bipolar pairs of adjectives that were rated using a 7-point scale, with 1 indicating positive traits and 7 indicating negative traits. The adjective pairs were adapted from previous research focusing on characteristics of the ideal employee, effective top managers, and motivated workers (Larkin & Pines, 1979) and from research focusing on Hispanics and accent discrimination by employment recruiters (Brennan & Brennan, 1981). The following are examples of the adjective pairs used: successful - unsuccessful, conscientious - unconscientious, competent - incompetent, industrious - lazy, organized - disorganized, attractive - unattractive, decisive - indecisive, stable - unstable, prompt - tardy, and trustworthy - untrustworthy. The complete listing of the 26 adjective pairs used is shown in Table 2 (Appendix).

The scale reliability of .87 met the minimum criterion of .70 recommended by Nunnally (1978). The 26 items used to measure perceptions of applicant characteristics were adapted from research by Larkin and Pines (1979), so a factor analysis was performed in order to ascertain whether sub-scales were evident or if the items should be combined to form one scale measuring the characteristics of the ideal employee. According to the factor analysis results, many of the items had mixed loadings. There did not appear to be any conceptual rationale for dividing the scale, so the composite scale was used to measure perceptions of applicant characteristics. The Cronbach alpha reliability estimate was .87 for this sample and .85 for an earlier pilot sample.

**Interviewer Hispanic ethnicity prejudice.** The degree of the subjects' prejudices against Hispanics was assessed with a scale derived from McConahay's Modern Racism Scale (1986). The scale was originally designed to measure prejudice against African Americans, so all occurrences of the word "African American/s" were changed to "Hispanic/s" (1986). This scale was designed to measure prejudice more inconspicuously than other prejudice scales by asking questions that were more political in nature. Additionally, the following 5 items were added to the original 7-item scale in order to include important Hispanic American issues: "Hispanics often intentionally exclude non-Spanish speakers in their conversations."; "Mexicans crossing the US border are often dealt with too harshly."; "Migrant farm-workers have been treated poorly in many instances."; "Hispanics are taking too many jobs from non-minorities."; "Hispanics are taking advantage of their minority status.". Subjects responded to a 7-point scale (7 = *strongly agree* and 1 = *strongly disagree*). The internal consistency reliability estimate for the adapted Hispanic Modern Racism Scale was .79. Table 3 (Appendix) shows all of the items included in this scale.



## Control Variables

**Social desirability.** An abbreviated 10-item form of the social desirability scale was used (Harrison, Hochwarter, Perrewé, Ralston, 1998; Strahan, & Gerbasi, 1972) (coded 1-7, with 1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree). Social desirability was included as a control variable, because previous research on ethnicity (Mullins, 1982) suggested that it may affect the results.

**Subject's demographic features.** A demographic section had questions on work experience (part-time and full-time), race/ ethnicity, GPA, major, gender, and age. Work experience was entered in number of years and was computed as an average of part-time and full-time work experience. The race/ethnicity categories were: Caucasian/ White; African American/ Black; Hispanic/ Latino/ Latina; Native American; Asian/ Pacific Islander; and Other. For purposes of analysis, members of the majority Caucasian/ White were coded 0, while members of the 5 minority categories were coded 1. Major was coded 1 for business majors and 0 for non majors and GPA was entered on a 4.0 scale. Gender was recorded as 0 for males and 1 for females. Age was entered in number of years. Although information was collected on all of these demographic variables, only three of these variables, work experience, ethnicity, and GPA, were used as control variables.

## RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 which predicted that interviewers who received the rater error training would have more positive perceptions of the perceived Hispanic applicant than the interviewers who did not receive the training was not supported. To test the Hypothesis, first perceptions of applicant characteristics was regressed on training for the cases in which the ethnicity of the applicant was perceived to be Hispanic ( $\beta = -.01$ , NS). Second, perceptions of applicant characteristics was regressed on training for the cases in which the ethnicity of the applicant was perceived to be Anglo ( $\beta = .17$ , NS). Since the coefficients for training in both of the two regression equations were not significant, this was not supported. The results of these regression analyses are shown in Table 1 (Appendix).

## DISCUSSION

One potential reason why the hypothesis was not supported could be that the training manipulation was not powerful enough due to the duration of the program. Interviewer training programs probably would be more effective if they lasted for a minimum of three hours. This would allow the trainees more time to absorb the information and become involved in the training.

Another area that could be redesigned in order to improve the effectiveness of the interviewer training would be to alter the content of the training program. For example, the interviewer training could be improved by including different techniques such as interview role playing in order to simulate reality as closely as possible and by giving the interviewers an opportunity to practice rating numerous video applicants in interview situations with a discussion of the ratings. The interviewer training program content in this study focused on discussion and activities that revolved around *inappropriate* biases that are commonly used by interviewers when rating applicants, such as using stereotypes, leniency effects, and halo effects. It may be

useful to include a larger focus on the *appropriate* factors to focus on in an applicant, such as qualifications and social skills.

Although training did not directly influence the interviewer's perceptions of applicant characteristics, training was significantly correlated with prejudice. Specifically, training was associated with a decrease in prejudice against Hispanics ( $r = -.20, p < .01$ ). Initially, it was thought that the perceptions of the applicant characteristics would be easier to change than Hispanic ethnicity prejudice. As this research suggests, this may not be the case. This is important to note since it suggests that future training efforts may be able to modify prejudicial attitudes. After a successful change in Hispanic ethnicity prejudice, an effort needs to be made to link this change in prejudicial attitudes with an actual change in perceptions of the affected individuals and ultimately with the behavior toward the individuals. In other words, the problem may be a transfer of training issue in that the subjects changed their prejudicial attitudes after training, but they did not transfer what they learned into a later simulated interview situation.

Yet another potential reason why the training manipulation did not work as expected is the fact that participation in the interviewer training was lower than expected. Out of 115 students in the class that was exposed to the training, only 87 students participated in the training. The low participation rate could have been due to the fact that the course was at 8 a.m., and that some of the students opted to forgo the extra credit for extra sleep. Of the total sample, 125 students or 59% of the total sample were not exposed to the training, while 87 students or 41% of the total sample were exposed to the training. A larger sample size and greater percentage of the sample receiving the interviewer rater error training is suggested for future research.

## Limitations

Some researchers may consider generalizability a problem when using students as subjects (Gordon, Slade, & Schmitt, 1986). A strength of using students for the sample in this research was that they had less exposure to workplace interviewer training, and therefore there was less interference with the training manipulation. Also, Barr and Hitt (1986) found that results were similar when using students or employees as subjects when examining applicant ethnicity issues in the interview process. This may be due to the fact that students, like managers, have been exposed to similar ethnic stereotypes through the media and society in general. If stereotypes are less prevalent among students due to more progressive ideas among the youth of society, then the evidence of Hispanic ethnicity prejudice among students found in this study actually may have been a conservative estimate of the Hispanic ethnicity prejudice of actual managers. Or, it may be that actual managers or human resource managers are more experienced with and aware of discrimination issues and would therefore be less likely to respond in biased manners. In order to investigate these potential differences between student interviewers versus actual managers, this research should be extended in the future by using managers and human resource managers as subjects.

The training manipulation used in this research could have been stronger. Strategies here include increasing interviewer training time; using Hispanic trainers or consultants; or introducing more explicit material such as video clips relevant to Hispanic issues. Presenting the trainee with an opportunity to personally identify with an ambassador of the culture, especially one in the flesh, could increase sensitivity and awareness. Personal familiarity may help mitigate the 'us versus them' attitude that results from lack of knowledge about a culture. Together the

addition of these types of strategies could result in a more effective training regimen that would decrease prejudices and ultimately lead to less hiring biases.

### **Future Research**

In future research the training manipulation needs to be longer in duration. A longer training period, consisting of perhaps a full one-day or two-day session at a minimum, would allow more time for the information to be absorbed by the trainees and would allow for the inclusion of more active practice, discussion, and examples. Future research could determine the most appropriate length of time for training considering the need to balance financial and time constraints against the need for sufficient time for learning to occur.

Even though the interviewer rater error training examined in this research was not effective in improving interviewer perceptions of the Hispanic applicant, hopefully this research will spark future, much needed research in this area. Interviewer training programs should be carefully examined in organizations to insure their effectiveness and to improve interviewer judgment. Rater error training is only one type of training that has the potential for improving the effectiveness interview process.

The 15 content areas mentioned previously in this article (Campion et al., 1997; Chapman and Zweig, 2005) provide an excellent framework for future research on interviewer training and improving the interview process. For example, training interviewers about the importance of utilizing job requirements which were determined from a thorough job analysis can help to increase the reliability and validity of the interview process. Continued, concerted efforts need to be made to improve the effectiveness of the interview process. Interviewer training in general is an important area of research that has great research potential, since selecting and hiring the most qualified employees is at the root of effective organizations.

### **Conclusion**

This study has important implications for organizations related to interviewer training, prejudice, diversity, sensitivity to changing demographics, accent biases, and interviewer effectiveness. Although the interviewer training manipulation in this study did not work as expected, this does not mean that interviewer training should be discontinued. Efforts at training employees to rate applicants based on qualifications and social skills and not irrelevant individual differences should continue, because this study demonstrated Hispanic ethnicity prejudice and biases such as those related to racioethnicity are extant. And, while the interviewer training was not associated with more positive perceptions of the Hispanic applicants, it was associated with decreased Hispanic ethnicity prejudice indicating that there is some value in this type of training. With a stronger interviewer training program that includes at least three hours of focused activities, such as active role playing, the results may have been more far-reaching.

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## APPENDIX

**Table 1-Results of Regressing Dependent Variable Perceptions of Applicant Characteristics on Independent Variable Training for the Perceived Hispanic Applicant and for the Perceived Anglo Applicant (H 1)**

Variables	STEP 1		STEP 2	
	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
<i>PERCEIVED HISPANIC ETHNICITY (N = 149)</i>				
Perceptions of Characteristics:				
<i>Control Variables:</i>				
Social Desirability	.20	2.48*	.20	2.40*
Work Experience	.13	1.65†	.13	1.64†
GPA	.16	2.01*	.16	1.98*
Ethnicity	-.01	-0.10	-.01	-0.05
<i>IV:</i>				
Training			-.01	0.08
F	3.05*		2.43*	
R <sup>2</sup>	.08		.08	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.05		.05	
$\Delta R^2$			.00	
<i>PERCEIVED ANGLO ETHNICITY (N = 40)</i>				
Perceptions of Characteristics:				
<i>Control Variables:</i>				
Social Desirability	.08	0.43	.02	0.09
Work Experience	.03	0.14	-.02	-0.12
GPA	.01	0.06	.01	0.03
Ethnicity	.08	0.48	.08	0.49
<i>IV:</i>				
Training			.17	0.92
F	.10		.25	
R <sup>2</sup>	.01		.04	
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	-.10		-.11	
$\Delta R^2$			.02	

N = 149 for Hispanic ethnicity; N = 40 for Anglo ethnicity; †p < .10; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001



**TABLE 2- Perceived Applicant Characteristics**

Please give your opinion of the audio job applicant by circling the appropriate number.

1. old (compared to the average human resource manager)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	young (compared to the average human resource manager)
2. standard American accented speech (tv/radio accent)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	ethnic accented speech
3. understandable accent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not understandable accent
4. unintelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	intelligent
5. successful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unsuccessful
6. poor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	wealthy
7. educated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	uneducated
8. untrustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	trustworthy
9. bad	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	good
10. kind	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	cruel
11. friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unfriendly
12. attractive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unattractive
13. neat	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	untidy
14. ambitious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not ambitious
15. industrious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	lazy
16. nervous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	relaxed
17. works rapidly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	works slowly
18. decisive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	indecisive
19. competent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	incompetent
20. disorganized	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	organized
21. conscientious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not conscientious
22. stable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	unstable
23. cautious	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	rash
24. prompt	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	tardy
25. cooperative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	uncooperative
26. independent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	dependent
27. argumentative	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not argumentative
28. impatient	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	patient
29. overly emotional	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	not overly emotional

Question 2 measures perceptions of accent. Questions 4 through 29 measure perceptions of applicant characteristics. Questions 4, 6, 8, 9, 16, 20, 27, 28, and 29 are reverse-coded.

**TABLE 3- Interviewer Hispanic Ethnicity Prejudice**

**Please indicate the degree to which you *disagree* or *agree* with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number.**

1. Over the past few years, the government and news media have shown more respect to Hispanics than they deserve.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
2. It is easy to understand the frustration of Hispanics in America.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
3. Discrimination against Hispanics is no longer a problem in the United States.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
4. Over the past few years, Hispanics have gotten more economically than they deserve.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
5. Hispanics have more influence upon school language issues than they ought to have.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
6. Hispanics are getting too demanding in their push for the usage of the Spanish language.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
7. Hispanics should not push themselves where they are not wanted.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
8. Hispanics are taking advantage of their minority status.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
9. Hispanics are taking too many jobs from non-minorities.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
10. Migrant farm-workers have been treated poorly in many instances.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
11. Hispanics often intentionally exclude non-Spanish speakers in their conversations.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**
12. Mexicans crossing the US border are often dealt with too harshly.  
**Strongly Disagree** 1      2      3      4      5      6      7 **Strongly Agree**

**Hispanic Modern Racism Scale (Adapted from McConahay’s Modern Racism Scale, 1986). Items 1 through 7 are adapted from the original scale and items 6 through 12 are additions. Questions 2, 10, and 12 are reverse-coded.**