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Prototypically American: The influence of accent and race on evaluation of job candidates

Immigrants and racial minorities continue to face hiring discrimination. The current study examined the influence of accent, race, as well as perceived Americanness on hiring evaluations. White US adults ($N = 375$) were randomly assigned to one of six conditions based on two factors: (a) accent (standard versus foreign) and (b) race (White, Black, and Asian). Accented speakers were perceived to be less American and were subsequently less likely to be hired. However, this effect was stronger or only emerged for White and Black candidates. The perception and evaluation of the Asian candidate were not explained by perceived Americanness. Implications for being perceived as American are discussed.

Key words: accent, prejudice and discrimination, hiring, ethnicity, social categorization

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In an increasingly globalized world (World Migration Report 2022, 2021), individuals are more likely to migrate to other countries in search of a different life or for more opportunities, among many other reasons. Yet, entering the labor market of a new country is fraught with many barriers, such as employment discrimination (Dietz, 2010), among other challenges. Unlike the physical characteristics associated with race, immigration status is not easily detectable, but people can infer such information about the speakers' background based on their accents (Fuertes et al., 2012; Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Further, accents can lead to biased evaluation of speakers in the hiring process (Deprez-Sims & Morris, 2010). Simultaneously, there is little legal protection in place to protect nonstandard accented speakers from discrimination in the hiring or promotion process (Lippi-Green, 1994). In addition, race is another factor that may influence hiring and promotion decisions in the workplace, regardless of the candidate's experience (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Watson et al., 2011). Thus, the current study sought to examine the influence of accents on how job candidates are perceived and whether this pattern differs based on race.

Accent and Employability

Minority job seekers may face hiring discrimination based on their ethnicities or other, less mainstream characteristics (Wilson et al., 2005). The differential treatment that some job seekers may face is a form of discrimination because non-job-related factors are influencing employers' hiring decisions (Wilson et al., 2005). Although individuals may face hiring discrimination based on many characteristics (e.g., gender, disability status), the current study focused on the influence of accent and race on hiring decisions.

Accent is a form of auditory information that conveys background information such as national origin of the speakers (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010). Accents cue listeners into the speaker's origin because they are relative to the speaker's geographical location (Lippi-Green, 1994). Nonstandard accents can be classified into two main categories: regional accents and foreign/non-native accents. Using the US as a point of reference, foreign-accented speakers speak English as a second language and their native language pronunciations are carried over in their English pronunciation. Regional-accented speakers speak English as a first language and their pronunciations are influenced by their regional locations in the U.S. In general, the standard accent is the accent accepted by the majority, such as the standard American Network accent spoken by news anchors.

Generally, standard-accented speakers are evaluated more positively than nonstandard-accented speakers (Fuertes et al., 2012). Studies on accents and hiring often control the content of the scripts given to the speakers, as well as their understandability. Even the content of the scripts (i.e., quality of the speech/messages) is controlled for, standard-accented speakers are favored over foreign-accented speakers (e.g., Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010). However, foreign-accented speakers are often preferred to standard-accented speakers for non-customer-fa-

cing jobs (Timming, 2017) and lower-status jobs (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010). The current study focused on foreign accents as a marker of immigration status.

Why Are Nonstandard Accented Speakers Perceived Negatively?

Two main theoretical perspectives exist to explain why nonstandard-accented speakers generally would be rated less favorably when they hold the same qualifications as standard-accented speakers. One perspective is the processing fluency explanation (see Hideg et al., 2022, for a review). Based on this perspective, nonstandard accents require more effort for the listener to process because the listeners are unfamiliar with the pattern of speech associated with a particular accent (Dragojevic et al., 2017). Thus, because it would take the listener more cognitive effort to process information spoken by a nonstandard-accented speaker, the listeners may perceive that having an accent impedes communications and would hold more negative attitudes toward the nonstandard-accented speaker (Dragojevic et al., 2017). The other perspective is the prejudice or stigma explanation (Hideg et al., 2022). Based on this perspective, nonstandard accent speakers are perceived as “other” as a result of social categorization and stereotypes (Spence et al., 2022). In other words, listeners can infer information about the speakers’ group membership from their accents through stereotype activation (Rakić et al., 2011; Spence et al., 2022). Subsequently, the activated stereotypes are attributed to the nonstandard accented speakers, leading to biased evaluations (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Hideg et al., 2022; Hogg & Reid, 2006).

Although both perspectives are important to fully capture how nonstandard-accented speakers are perceived, the current study focused on the prejudice/stereotype explanation for two reasons. First, a recent meta-analysis suggested that the processing fluency explanation is not able to fully account for all the biased evaluations of nonstandard-accented speakers (Spence et al., 2022). The processing fluency explanation may be best used to explain hiring decisions based on the communication demands of the job (e.g., customer service representative vs. data entry clerk, Spence et al., 2022). However, inconsistent with the processing fluency perspective, comprehensibility of the speaker or accentedness of the speaker (i.e., how “heavy” their accent is) is not a reliable predictor of hiring biases (Spence et al., 2022). The prejudice/stereotype explanation appears to be the better explanation for other variables such as perceived status of speaker and perceived solidarity (e.g., friendliness, warmth, etc.) of the speaker (Spence et al., 2022). Second, and more importantly, the current study focused on the prejudice explanation of hiring bias through social categorization because it may provide nonstandard-accented speakers with a controllable variable that they can actively use to mitigate biases they are subjected to.

Prototypicality of Americanness

Accents, especially foreign accents, can spontaneously elicit social categorization and provide listeners with clues about the speaker's group membership (Rakić et al.,

2011). This is important because accents may indicate to listeners that the speaker is an immigrant. In other words, accent likely elicits outgroup categorization.

One way that social categorization has been studied is through perceived prototypicality—the extent to which a person is a typical example or prototype of their group (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Evidence suggests that prototypicality plays an important role in influencing the perception of targets. As prototypicality increases (i.e., as the target is perceived to “fit” into the defining characteristics of the group), perceivers are more likely to make stereotypic evaluations of the targets (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Previous studies on accent have examined the prototypicality of the targets based on their country of origin (e.g., Dragojevic et al., 2017; Rakić et al., 2011), which focuses on the perception that the target is an outgroup member. The current study examined the extent to which each candidate is prototypical of Americans, which emphasizes the superordinate identity of “American” and focuses on how much the target belongs in the ingroup (Gaertner et al., 1993). Previous studies on social categorization of accents have found that foreign-accented speakers were more likely to be categorized as foreigners, even when they looked ethnically prototypical of the host country (Kinzler et al., 2010; Rakić et al., 2011). Thus, foreign-accented speakers should generally be considered as less prototypical of Americans.

The examination of the extent to which speakers are perceived as ingroup members is purposeful. The common ingroup identity model asserts that prejudice can be reduced by changing individuals’ cognitive representation of others (Gaertner et al., 1993). In other words, by shifting the social categorization from two distinct groups toward a single and overlapping group, perceivers may view a target who was once an outgroup member as now an ingroup member. There is theoretical utility in examining the extent to which speakers are viewed as ingroup members. Prototypicality of their national origin, which empathizes otherness, does not provide speakers with a path to manage their self-impression. Foreign-accented speakers may be rightfully reluctant to downplay their cultural identity and practices because such practices can leave lasting psychological harm (see Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013, for a meta-analysis on biculturalism). Examining the extent to which speakers are perceived as ingroup members can have profound downstream consequences to how they are evaluated. Importantly, given that the U.S. is a “salad bowl” of cultures, there is room for foreign-accented speakers to highlight their Americanness without sacrificing their cultural identity and practices. To our knowledge, the current study is the first within the accent hiring bias literature to examine the prototypicality of Americanness.

Race as a Moderator

Race is an important moderator to examine when considering prototypicality of Americanness. The prototype of an American in the US is someone who is devoted to American ideals, speaks English, and is of a Northern European ancestry (Devos & Banaji, 2005). Based on this prototype, White Americans are considered to be the most prototypical of Americans (Devos & Banaji, 2005), followed by Black

Americans (Zou & Cheryan, 2017), with Asian Americans being the least prototypical of Americans (Zou & Cheryan, 2017). Thus, it is important to examine race as a moderator of accent and prototypicality as it may account for differences in prior findings on the interaction between accent and race on hiring biases. Importantly, prototypicality of Americanness may be a useful variable to explain seemingly inconsistent findings on the interaction between accent and race in the literature.

In one study, researchers examined the influence of accent and race (White vs. Asian) on participants' hiring recommendations (Huang et al., 2013, Study 1). They found that foreign-accented speakers were less likely to be hired than standard-accented speakers, yet no main effect of or interaction with race was found. In a different study, Segrest Purkiss et al. (2006) examined the influence of accent and ethnicity via a Hispanic (vs. an Anglicized) name. They found that the same foreign-accented candidate was rated more positively when he had an Anglicized name but more negatively when he had a Hispanic name. One potential reason why an interaction pattern emerged for one study and not the other may be due to the speakers' race. Perhaps a standard-accented Asian speaker may be perceived similarly to a standard-accented White speaker because they are closer to the American prototype, while a foreign Hispanic speaker may be perceived differently from a foreign White speaker because they are further away from the American prototype. In other words, racial minority standard-accented speakers are perceived positively relative to their foreign-accented counterparts. But, racial minority foreign-accented speakers would still be perceived less positively relative to White foreign-accented speakers (Dragojevic & Goatley-Soan, 2022). We argue that prototypicality of Americanness is an important variable that can illuminate and explain these findings.

The Current Study

Despite the research available on accent bias, to our knowledge, no study thus far has examined the influence of prototypicality of Americanness on evaluation of job candidates. Further, we argue that race is an important moderator to examine in the relation between accent and outcome variables through prototypicality (see Figure 1 for our theoretical model). In order to examine the role of prototypicality, we have chosen to examine Black and Asian speakers as racial minorities who are perceived to be American and less American, respectively (Zou & Cheryan, 2017). The aim of the current study was twofold: (a) to replicate prior research on accent and categorization and (b) to extend previous research by examining the prototypicality of Americanness as a mediator. We proposed three hypotheses:

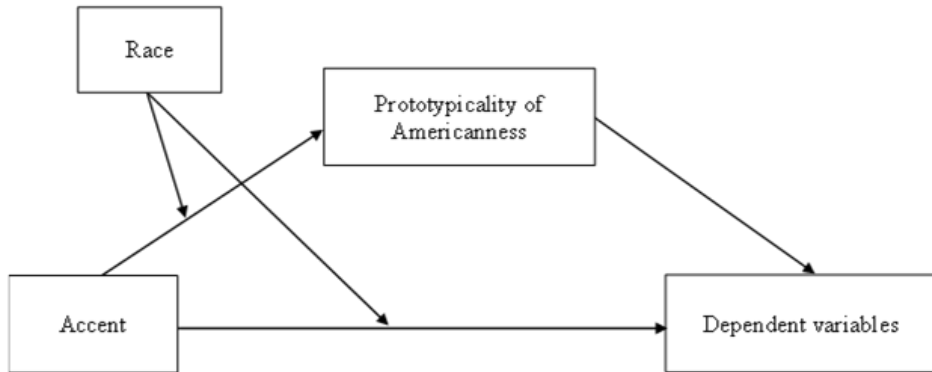
1. Foreign-accented speakers will be evaluated more negatively across outcomes.
2. Accent and race will interact to influence perception and evaluations of the candidates.
3. Perceived prototypicality of Americanness will mediate the relationship between accent and evaluations of the candidates.

Our hypotheses, study design, and planned analyses were pre-registered

on the Open Science Framework website (<https://osf.io/5fyb6>)¹. Survey materials, supplemental results, and data are all available on OSF (https://osf.io/nawru/?view_only=9a4eeda2bc65455e87c8ba0d68a04a19).

Pilot

Figure 1. *Theoretical model of accent on dependent variables through prototypicality, moderated by race*



Participants

To test our experimental design and examine the comprehensibility of the speaker, we conducted a pilot study with 118 participants. After removing participants who failed either the accent or race manipulation checks, 110 participants remained in the final analysis (race: 100% White Americans; gender: 33.6% men, 65.5% women; age: $M = 19.17$, $SD = 1.19$). Participants were randomly assigned to one out of six conditions based on a 2 (accent: standard vs. foreign) $\times$ 3 (race: White, Black, and Asian) between-subjects design. Participants were instructed to listen to an audio clip and make a gut judgment about the speaker. The audio speech (accent manipulation) and the photo (race manipulation) were presented simultaneously. Following the audio clip, participants responded to three statements using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The three statements were “Please indicate the extent to which the candidate was fluent,” “Please indicate the extent to which the candidate was difficult to understand” (reverse-scored), and “Please indicate the extent to which the candidate was clear.”

¹ Political orientation was not related to any of the outcomes; thus, while it was included in OSF hypotheses it was removed from all analyses.

Experimental Stimuli

Accent

Following prior studies (e.g., Dietz, 2010; Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010), the current study used the verbal-guise technique (i.e., different speakers used for different accents) to naturally manipulate accents and minimize stereotypic exaggeration of accents (Hosoda & Stone-Romero, 2010). Accent was manipulated using four audio clips from four different speakers. The accents used included a standard American accent, an Eastern European accent, a Western African accent, and an Eastern Asian accent. The standard American accent was used across all standard-accent conditions. However, the foreign-accent conditions had different recordings matched to their race. All speakers were male and were given the same script to rehearse before recording. They were instructed to make an effort not to sound overly enthusiastic or monotonous. The final recordings were all comparable in length.

Race

Race was manipulated using photos from the Chicago Face Database (Ma et al., 2015). Photos of a White male, a Black male, and an Asian male were matched on attractiveness ratings because attractiveness has been shown to be related to perceived competence (Eagly et al., 1991). All photos were rated as medium in attractiveness (i.e., ratings all at about the midpoint of a 7-point scale).

Results and Discussion

There was a main effect of race, but not of accent nor interaction, on participants' perception of the speaker's fluency, $F(2, 104) = 3.13, p = .048, \eta^2 = .05$. A Bonferroni-adjusted post hoc test revealed that participants perceived the Asian target as significantly more fluent than the White target ($M_{\text{difference}} = 1.08, SE = .44, p = .048$) but similarly to the Black target ($M_{\text{difference}} = 0.28, SE = .25, p = .818$). There was a main effect of accent on participants' perceived ease of understanding the speakers, $F(1, 104) = 4.68, p = .033, \eta^2 = .04$, such that the standard-accented speaker ($M = 5.58, SE = .24$) was perceived as easier to understand than the foreign-accented speaker ($M = 4.71, SE = .33$). No main effect of race nor an interaction was found on perceived ease to understand. Finally, no statistically significant main effect of race, accent, or interaction was found for participants' perception that the speaker was clear.

The audio clips were comparable in terms of the speakers' clarity. While ease of understandability was different based on accent, we were less concerned about it, as a recent meta-analysis revealed that comprehensibility of speakers (e.g., ease of understanding the speaker) is not a reliable moderator in the relation between accent and hiring bias when comprehensibility was measured via subjective means (Spence et al., 2022). Further, the main effect of race on perceived fluency appeared

to be driven by the differences in race within the standard-accent conditions, which had the same speaker. It appears that the Asian candidate was elevated in perceived fluency when they had a standard accent, relative to other races (see King et al., 2006; Leong & Hayes, 1990, for the positive perception of Asian Americans in organizational settings). Importantly, we did not find consistent differences based on accent predicting fluency or clarity. Speakers in all six conditions were rated above the mid-point of the scale across the three variables. Overall, we believe the speakers were comparable and used these audio clips as our manipulation of accent.

Method

Participants

Based on an a priori *G*Power* (Faul et al., 2007) analysis, 489 participants were needed to detect a Cohen's *f* effect size of .15 with 85% power. To be eligible for the study, participants had to identify as White and had to be living in the United States. Participants were recruited through TurkPrime ($N = 616$) and completed the study online, which took approximately 25 minutes to complete. After removing participants for failing at least one attention check and both manipulation checks, the final sample consisted of 375 participants (gender: 54.7% women, 45.1% men; age: $M = 47.92$, $SD = 15.40$).

Procedure

Participants were informed that they would be participating in a study examining hiring decisions. After providing informed consent, they were instructed to read a job posting for a manager position and a resume from a candidate whom they would review. The fictitious job posting and resume were created for the study. Both were identical across conditions. The resume was developed in a way that would make the candidate's qualification ambiguous and did not include any information that would indicate immigration status nor race. Then, participants were instructed to listen to a recording from the candidate speaking about their qualification and fit for the job. Using the same experimental stimuli and design as our pilot, participants were randomly assigned to one out of six conditions. At this point, the photo of the candidate and the speech were presented to participants simultaneously. After listening to the speech, participants responded to a series of measures and demographic questions. Finally, participants were thanked for their time and received compensation through TurkPrime.

Measures²

Unless otherwise indicated, all measures used a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Feeling Thermometer

General favorability towards the target was measured using the feeling thermometer scale from Hummert et al. (2002). Participants responded to the question with options ranging from 0 (*unfavorable*) to 100 (*favorable*, $M = 73.17$, $SD = 21.93$).

Speech Evaluation

Perception of the candidate's speech was measured using three items: "The candidate had a high-quality speech," "I clearly understood the candidate's work ethics," and "The candidate was fluent in delivering his ideas" ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.57$, $\alpha = .91$).

Perceived Qualification

Perceived qualification for the job was measured using four items: "The candidate clearly expressed his qualifications for the job," "The candidate clearly expressed his experiences for the job," "The candidate is qualified for this position," and "The candidate would improve the relationship between Rain Tech and its partners" ($M = 5.37$, $SD = 1.24$, $\alpha = .90$).

Hiring Recommendation

Participants responded to a single item on whether Rain Tech should hire the target, "Rain Tech should hire the candidate for this position" ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.59$).

Salary Recommendation

Participants were given a typical starting salary range (\$50,000 to \$130,000) for development managers and were asked to recommend a starting salary for the target. Participants responded to this item using a free-response format ($M = 71,324$, $SD = 16,869$).

Prototypicality of Americanness

The extent to which participants perceived that the candidate was a typical example of Americans was measured using two questions (adapted from Wilkins et al., 2010). The two questions used were "In general, how stereotypically American is this candidate?" and "In general, how similar to other Americans is this candidate?" Participants

² Results for traits attribution and behavioral intentions are reported in supplemental results on the OSF page.

responded to each question using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*not at all stereotypical/similar*) to 7 (*wery stereotypical/similar*, $M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.56$, $\alpha = .70$).

Results

Our final sample was smaller than the planned sample size. We conducted a sensitivity analysis to determine the minimum effect size that our sample can detect. Using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), we determined that our sample was sensitive enough to reliably detect an $\eta^2 = 0.04$ at 85% power. We are confident that our sample size is adequate to detect the main effects of accent on outcome variables, especially hiring decision related variables (i.e., perceived qualification and hiring recommendation).

H1 and H2: Main Effects and Interaction

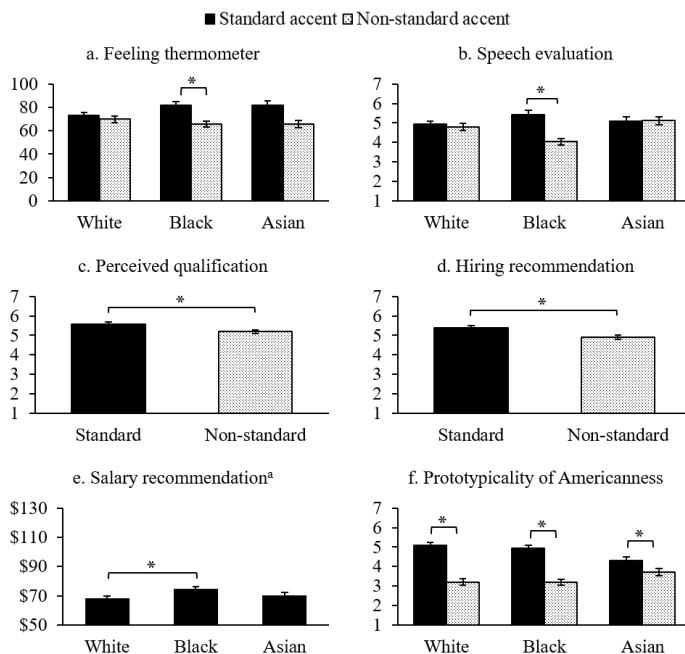
The effects of accent and race were analyzed using a series of analyses of variance (ANOVAs) with accent and race as the predictors. Originally, we hypothesized that an interaction pattern would emerge such that the racial groups would differ within each accent condition. However, a clear pattern of results emerged for differences based on accent conditions within each race. Therefore, Bonferoni-adjusted post hoc tests on statistically significant interactions were conducted for the interactions on accent within each racial condition. See Table 1 for the full results and Figure 2 for the statistically significant effects.

Consistent with H1, there was a main effect of accent such that participants felt more positive toward the standard-accented speaker, rated the standard-accented speaker more positively on speech evaluation, perceived qualification, and hiring intentions, and perceived that they were more typical of Americans than the foreign-accented speaker. Some of the main effects of accent were qualified by a significant interaction between accent and race (H2). Participants felt more positively toward and rated the speech more positively for the Black standard-accented speaker compared to the Black foreign-accented speaker. A slightly different pattern of interaction emerged for ratings of prototypicality. Participants perceived the White and Black candidates who spoke with an accent as less typical of Americans than their standard-accented counterparts. The same effect for the Asian candidate was found but to a weaker extent. There were no statistically significant interactions found for perceived qualifications, hiring, and salary recommendations. Unexpectedly, salary recommendation was not predicted by accent, but was the only outcome predicted by race. The White candidate was recommended the lowest salary while the Black candidate was recommended the highest salary, which were statistically significantly different from each other. Starting salary recommended for the Asian candidate was between those two and was not statistically significantly different from either.

Table 1. *The Influence of Accent, Race, and their Interaction on Each Outcome Variable*

	Feeling thermometer				Speech evaluation			
	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Accent	1	8.55	.004	0.02	1	10.19	.002	0.03
Race	2	1.02	.340	0.01	2	1.73	.178	0.01
Race $\times$ Accent	2	4.17	.016	0.02	2	8.57	< .001	0.04
Error	344				369			
	Perceived qualification				Hiring recommendation			
	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Accent	1	9.45	.002	0.03	1	9.42	.002	0.02
Race	2	0.55	.577	0.003	2	1.90	.152	0.01
Race $\times$ Accent	2	1.49	.227	0.01	2	2.02	.135	0.01
Error	369				368			
	Salary recommendation				Prototypicality of Americanness			
	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Accent	1	0.53	.466	0.002	1	98.75	< .001	0.20
Race	2	4.68	.010	0.03	2	0.31	0.736	0.001
Race $\times$ Accent	2	1.24	.289	0.01	2	7.32	0.001	0.03
Error	338				369			

Note. Time 2 means represent total number of unique details provided during the interview cumulatively across Time 1 and Time 2. Results of analysis of variance (ANOVAs) tests reported. Bold text indicates a significant effect.

Figure 2. *The influence of accent and/or race on each outcome variable*

Note. Mean differences between accent and race are shown for each outcome variable. If the interaction is not statistically significant, statistically significant main effects are shown instead. Error bars represent standard errors. Statistically significant differences are denoted by an asterisk (*).

^a Y-axis value is in the thousands (i.e., \$50 = \$50,000). * $p < .05$

H3: Moderated Mediation Hypothesis

The moderated mediation model was analyzed using PROCESS macros Model 8 (Hayes, 2018). Accent was entered as the predictor, prototypicality of Americanness was entered as a mediator, and race was entered as a moderator. Speech evaluation, perceived qualification, hiring recommendation, salary recommendation, and feeling thermometer were entered as outcomes in separate models. We used a bias-corrected 95% confidence interval using 5000 bootstrapped samples to examine the direct and indirect effects. Statistically significant effects are indicated by a confidence interval that does not include zero. See Table 2 for the full results.

Consistent with H3, prototypicality of Americanness was positively related to all outcome variables except for starting salary. Further, the indirect pathway from accent to each outcome variable was negative, suggesting that foreign-accented speakers were perceived as less typical of being American, which in turn was negatively associated with general favorability, speech evaluation, perceived qualification, and hiring recommendation. The indirect pathway was not statistically significant for starting salary. Interestingly, overall, the indirect effect was statistically significant for White and Black candidates but not the Asian candidate, perhaps because the effect of accent on prototypicality was the least pronounced for the Asian candidate (see Figure 2).

Table 2. *Mediation of Accent on Outcome Variables through Prototypicality, as Moderated by Race*

Model summary	Feeling thermometer		Speech evaluation	
	<i>b</i> (SE)	95% CI	<i>b</i> (SE)	95% CI
Constant	56.66 (4.95)	[46.93, 66.40]	3.74 (.34)	[3.07, 4.40]
Prototypicality	3.28 (.83)	[1.64, 4.92]	.23 (.06)	[-.12, .35]
Accent (0 = no accent)	2.67 (4.03)	[-5.25, 10.59]	.32 (.28)	[-.23, .86]
Dummy 1	9.04 (3.77)	[1.63, 16.45]	.56 (.25)	[-.05, 1.06]
Dummy 2	5.98 (4.33)	[-2.53, 14.49]	.36 (.28)	[-.20, .92]
D1 × Accent	-13.06 (5.23)	[-23.34, -2.78]	-1.31 (.36)	[-2.02, -.61]
D2 × Accent	-2.04 (5.94)	[-13.73, 9.65]	-.17 (.40)	[-.95, .62]
Direct effect: A → DV				
White	2.67 (4.03)	[-5.25, 10.59]	.32 (.28)	[-.23, .86]
Black	-10.39 (3.95)	[-18.16, -2.62]	-1.00 (.27)	[-1.53, -.47]
Asian	.63 (4.52)	[-8.26, 9.52]	.15 (.30)	[-.43, .74]
Indirect effect: A → P → DV				
White	-6.10 (2.04)	[-10.38, -2.39]	-.44 (.13)	[-.72, -.19]
Black	-5.70 (1.93)	[-9.77, -2.19]	-.40 (.12)	[-.65, -.17]
Asian	-1.69 (1.20)	[-4.39, .40]	-.14 (.08)	[-.32, .002]
Index of moderated mediation				
Dummy 1	.40 (1.07)	[-1.64, 2.72]	.04 (.07)	[-.10, .20]
Dummy 2	4.42 (2.02)	[1.16, 8.90]	.30 (.13)	[-.09, .59]
Model	$R^2 = .10$		$R^2 = .13$	
	$F(6, 343) = 6.28, p < .001$		$F(6, 368) = 8.89, p < .001$	

Table 2 (cont.)

Perceived qualification			Hiring recommendation	
Model summary	<i>b</i> (SE)	95% CI	<i>b</i> (SE)	95% CI
Constant	4.33 (.27)	[3.80, .87]	3.95 (.35)	[3.26, 4.64]
Prototypicality	.22 (.05)	[.13, .31]	.24 (.06)	[.12, .35]
Accent (0 = no accent)	.15 (.22)	[−.29, .59]	.11 (.29)	[−.45, .68]
Dummy 1	.30 (.20)	[−.11, .70]	.43 (.26)	[−.09, .95]
Dummy 2	.32 (.23)	[−.13, .76]	.52 (.30)	[−.06, 1.10]
D1 × Accent	−.47 (.29)	[−1.03, .10]	−.65 (.37)	[−1.38, .08]
D12 × Accent	−.24 (.32)	[−.86, .3]	−.19 (.41)	[−1.00, .62]
Direct effect: A → DV				
White	.15 (.22)	[−.29, .59]	.11 (.29)	[−.45, .68]
Black	−.32 (.22)	[−.74, .11]	−.54 (.28)	[−1.09, .01]
Asian	−.09 (.24)	[−.56, .38]	−.08 (.31)	[−.68, .53]
Indirect effect: A → P → DV				
White	−.42 (.11)	[−.64, −.21]	−.45 (.14)	[−.73, −.20]
Black	−.38 (.10)	[−.59, −.19]	−.41 (.13)	[−.68, −.18]
Asian	−.13 (.08)	[−.29, .003]	−.14 (.08)	[−.32, .0003]
Index of moderated mediation				
Dummy 1	.04 (.07)	[−.09, .18]	.04 (.08)	[−.11, .20]
Dummy 2	.28 (.11)	[.09, .54]	.30 (.13)	[.09, .61]
Model	<i>R</i> ² = .10		<i>R</i> ² = .09	
	<i>F</i> (6, 368) = 6.45, <i>p</i> < .001		<i>F</i> (6, 367) = 5.98, <i>p</i> < .001	
Salary recommendation ^a				
Model summary	<i>b</i> (SE)	95% CI		
Constant	65673 (4066)	[57675, 73672]		
Prototypicality	475 (685)	[−872.05, 1822]		
Accent (0 = no accent)	1682 (3288)	[−4785, 8150]		
Dummy 1	9390 (3008)	[3473, 15307]		
Dummy 2	2584 (3404)	[−4113, 9280]		
D1 × Accent	−6100 (4207)	[−14375, 2174]		
D2 × Accent	−1047 (4778)	[−10445, 8351]		
Direct effect: A → DV				
White	1682 (3288)	[−4785, 8150]		
Black	−4418 (3151)	[−10616, 1780]		
Asian	635 (3574)	[−6394, 7665]		
Indirect effect: A → P → DV				
White	−903 (1428)	[−3880, 1761]		
Black	−811 (1267)	[−3387, 1627]		
Asian	−201 (402)	[−1087, 574]		
Index of moderated mediation				
Dummy 1	92 (320)	[−409, 909]		
Dummy 2	702 (1171)	[−1237, 3294]		
Model	<i>R</i> ² = .04			
	<i>F</i> (6, 337) = 2.06, <i>p</i> = .058			

Note. Results of PROCESS Model 8; unstandardized coefficients reported. Bold text indicates a significant effect. CI = confidence interval; Dummy 1 (D1): White = 0, Black = 1, Asian = 0; Dummy 2 (D2): White = 0, Black = 0, Asian = 1; A → DV = direct effect of accent on dependent variable, A → P → DV = indirect effect of accent on dependent variable through prototypicality. ^a Unstandardized coefficients rounded to the nearest whole number.

Exploratory Analyses

As an exploration, we examined the serial mediation effect of prototypicality and general feelings in the relation between accent and dependent variables, as moderated by race. The outcome variables were speech evaluation, perceived qualification, hiring recommendation, and salary recommendation. In order to explore this model, we utilized Hayes's (2018) PROCESS macro, Model 85, in SPSS. We used the same analysis procedure from the previous analyses, with the exception that feeling thermometer was entered as a serial mediator after prototypicality.

Consistently across the four outcomes, the serial indirect pathway was statistically significant for the White and Black targets, but not the Asian target. In other words, the presence of a foreign accent decreased participants' perception that the White and Black targets were prototypical of Americans, which was associated with participants' feelings toward the targets, and finally, feelings predicted participants' responses on the four outcome variables (see Table 3).

Table 3. *Mediation of Accent on Outcome Variables through Prototypicality and Feeling Thermometer, as Moderated by Race*

	Speech evaluation			Perceived qualification	
Model summary	b (SE)	95% CI		b (SE)	95% CI
Constant	1.10 (.30)	[.52, 1.69]		1.96 (.21)	[1.53, 2.38]
Accent (0 = no accent)	.15 (.20)	[-.26, .55]		.03 (.15)	[-.26, .32]
Prototypicality (P)	.06 (.04)	[-.03, .14]		.08 (.03)	[.02, .14]
Feeling thermometer (F)	.05 (.002)	[.04, .05]		.04 (.002)	[.04, .05]
Dummy 1	.08 (.19)	[-.30, .46]		-.11 (.14)	[-.39, .16]
Dummy 2	.09 (.22)	[-.35, .52]		.09 (.16)	[-.22, .41]
D1 × Accent	-.67 (.27)	[-1.20, -.14]		.08 (.19)	[-.31, .46]
D2 × Accent	-.15 (.30)	[-.74, .45]		-.24 (.22)	[-.68, .19]
Direct effect: A → DV					
White	.15 (.20)	[-.26, .55]		.03 (.15)	[-.26, .32]
Black	-.52 (.20)	[-.92, -.12]		.10 (.15)	[-.19, .39]
Asian	-.003 (.23)	[-.46, .45]		-.22 (.17)	[-.55, .11]
Indirect effect: A → P → DV					
White	-.11 (.08)	[-.27, .04]		-.14 (.06)	[-.26, -.04]
Black	-.10 (.08)	[-.26, .04]		-.14 (.06)	[-.25, -.04]
Asian	-.03 (.03)	[-.10, .02]		-.04 (.03)	[-.11, .01]
Index of moderated mediation for indirect effect through prototypicality					
Dummy 1	.01 (.02)	[-.04, .06]		.01 (.03)	[-.05, .06]
Dummy 2	.08 (.06)	[-.03, .22]		.10 (.05)	[.02, .22]
Indirect effect: A → F → DV					
White	.13 (.20)	[-.28, .53]		.11 (.18)	[-.22, .47]
Black	-.51 (.19)	[-.87, -.14]		-.44 (.17)	[-.76, -.11]
Asian	.03 (.24)	[-.43, .52]		.03 (.21)	[-.38, .46]
Index of moderated mediation for indirect effect through feeling thermometer					
Dummy 1	-.64 (.24)	[-1.10, -.16]		-.56 (.21)	[-.96, -.14]
Dummy 2	-.10 (.32)	[-.72, .52]		-.09 (.28)	[-.64, .45]

Table 3 (cont.)

Indirect effect: $A \rightarrow P \rightarrow F \rightarrow DV$				
White	-.29 (.10)	[-.50, -.11]	-.26 (.09)	[-.45, -.10]
Black	-.28 (.09)	[-.48, -.11]	-.24 (.08)	[-.42, -.09]
Asian	-.08 (.06)	[-.21, .02]	-.07 (.05)	[-.19, .02]
Index of moderated mediation for the serial indirect effects				
Dummy 1	.02 (.05)	[-.08, .13]	.01 (.05)	[-.07, .12]
Dummy 2	.21 (.10)	[.06, .44]	.19 (.09)	[.05, .39]
$R^2 = .74$				
Model	$F(7, 343) = 57.80, p < .001$		$R^2 = .78$	
			$F(7, 343) = 77.54, p < .001$	
	Hiring recommendation		Salary recommendation ^a	
Model summary	b (SE)	95% CI	b (SE)	95% CI
Constant	.66 (.25)	[.16, 1.16]	45681 (4567)	[36696, 54665]
Accent (0 = no accent)	-.06 (.17)	[-.41, .28]	798 (3065)	[-5233, 6829]
Prototypicality (P)	.04 (.04)	[-.03, .11]	-599 (658)	[-1894, 696]
Feeling thermometer (F)	.06 (.002)	[.05, .06]	355 (43)	[270, 441]
Dummy 1	-.11 (.17)	[-.44, .21]	6031 (2890)	[346, 11716]
Dummy 2	.10 (.19)	[-.27, .47]	-269 (3332)	[-6824, 6286]
D1 × Accent	.09 (.23)	[-.36, .54]	-2381 (3975)	[-10202, 5439]
D2 × Accent	-.12 (.26)	[-.63, .39]	-508 (4570)	[-9499, 8482]
Direct effect: $A \rightarrow DV$				
White	-.07 (.17)	[-.41, .28]	798 (3065)	[-5233, 6829]
Black	.02 (.17)	[-.32, .36]	-1583 (2986)	[-7458, 4292]
Asian	-.19 (.20)	[-.57, .20]	289 (3461)	[-6519, 7098]
Indirect effect: $A \rightarrow P \rightarrow DV$				
White	-.08 (.06)	[-.21, .05]	1107 (1255)	[-1399, 3550]
Black	-.07 (.06)	[-.20, .05]	1003 (1143)	[-1259, 3241]
Asian	-.02 (.03)	[-.08, .02]	193 (364)	[-359, 1100]
Index of moderated mediation for indirect effect through prototypicality				
Dummy 1	.004 (.02)	[-.03, .04]	-104 (315)	[-837, 511]
Dummy 2	.05 (.05)	[-.04, .17]	-913 (1082)	[-3130, 1253]
Indirect effect: $A \rightarrow F \rightarrow DV$				
White	.17 (.24)	[-.30, .65]	532 (1489)	[-2400, 3487]
Black	-.61 (.23)	[-1.05, -.17]	-3147 (1498)	[-6291, -421]
Asian	.04 (.30)	[-.52, .63]	-191 (1588)	[-3221, 2967]
Index of moderated mediation for indirect effect through feeling thermometer				
Dummy 1	-.79 (.29)	[-1.36, -.22]	-3679 (1920)	[-7663, -65]
Dummy 2	-.13 (.39)	[-.88, .63]	-724 (2140)	[-5101, 3455]
Indirect effect: $A \rightarrow P \rightarrow F \rightarrow DV$				
White	-.35 (.12)	[-.61, -.13]	-2094 (769)	[-3745, -755]
Black	-.34 (.11)	[-.58, -.13]	-1897 (703)	[-3412, -671]
Asian	-.10 (.07)	[-.26, .03]	-366 (388)	[-1181, 394]
Index of moderated mediation for the serial indirect effects				
Dummy 1	.02 (.06)	[-.10, .16]	197 (397)	[-552, 1071]
Dummy 2	.26 (.12)	[.07, .54]	1728 (818)	[472, 3620]

Table 3 (cont.)

Model	$R^2 = .68$	$R^2 = .20$
	$F(7, 342) = 103.83, p < .001$	$F(7, 319) = 11.43, p < .001$

Note. Results of PROCESS Model 85; unstandardized coefficients reported. Bold text indicates a significant effect. CI = confidence interval; Dummy 1 (D1): White = 0, Black = 1, Asian = 0; Dummy 2 (D2): White = 0, Black = 0, Asian = 1; $A \rightarrow DV$ = direct effect of accent on dependent variable, $A \rightarrow P \rightarrow DV$ = indirect effect of accent on dependent variable through prototypicality, $A \rightarrow F \rightarrow DV$ = indirect effect of accent on dependent variable through feeling thermometer, $A \rightarrow P \rightarrow F \rightarrow DV$ = serial indirect effect of accent on dependent variable through prototypicality and feeling thermometer. ^a Unstandardized coefficients rounded to the nearest whole number.

Discussion

Although previous research examined the effect of accent and race, no study to date has examined how accented speakers are perceived as an ingroup member. Replicating prior research (Fuertes et al., 2012; Spence et al., 2022), foreign-accent speakers were rated lower on all outcomes except for starting salary recommendation. The interaction between race and accent was partially supported in our study. Consistent with Huang et al's (2013) findings, candidates were perceived similarly regardless of their accent on general favorability and speech quality when they were White or Asian, but not Black. Replicating prior literature, accent trumped race in how prototypical of the ingroup the speaker was perceived to be (Kinzler et al., 2010; Paladino & Mazzurega, 2020). Specifically, both the White and Black candidates were perceived to be less typical of Americans when they spoke with an accent, and the effect was weaker, but still statistically significant, for the Asian candidate. This is important as the extent to which the candidate was perceived as an ingroup member mediated the effect of accent on outcomes for the White and Black candidates, but not the Asian candidate.

One reason for the unexpected results may be because Asian Americans are already perceived as more foreign compared to White and Black Americans (Zou & Cheryan, 2017). Therefore, there is no additional penalty on perceived Americanness incurred when the Asian candidate speaks with a foreign accent. Further, although the job posting did not indicate that the job position was related to technology, the company name ("Rain Tech") may have influenced participants to believe the job is technology-based, which Asian Americans are stereotyped to be good at science and technological-based jobs (Leong & Hayes, 1990), and tend to receive high evaluation for high-status jobs regardless of resume quality (King et al., 2006). However, participants did not rate the Asian American candidate more highly than the candidates from other racial groups in our study.

Interestingly, among the standard-accented speakers, the Black candidate was favored over the White candidate in several outcomes, namely, feelings thermometer, salary recommendation, and speech evaluation (to a lesser extent). This finding is consistent with an emerging social phenomenon of pro-Black bias as opposed to pro-White bias in social judgment (see Axt et al., 2016, for a detailed

discussion). One variable that may predict pro-Black bias is liberalism (Axt et al., 2016), yet political orientation was not a significant covariate in our analyses. It is unclear what the driver behind this pro-Black bias was in our study. Perhaps participants slightly preferred the Black candidate over the other candidates with the standard-accent conditions because they were using a different standard for judgment (Biernat & Manis, 1994). When using subjective measures of social judgment, individuals are prone to making judgments based on different standards associated with certain social identities (Biernat & Manis, 1994). Because Black Americans have historically been disadvantaged in the US, participants may recognize the candidate as more accomplished given their circumstances. Future researchers should measure objective and subjective outcomes to investigate the possibility of shifting standards of judgments.

Overall, our study addressed a need for more intersectionality in the accent bias literature (Dragojevic et al., 2021). Our study suggests that immigrants may face discrimination during the hiring process simply because they are perceived as less American, and this pattern may differ by race. The extent to which accented speakers are viewed as ingroup members may predict favorable evaluations of them according to the social identity theory (Turner et al., 1979). Prior research has suggested that ingroup love is distinct from outgroup hate (Brewer, 1999), which individuals are reluctant to display relative to ingroup love (Weisel & Böhm, 2015). Further, our exploratory analyses suggest that prototypicality predicts individuals' feelings toward the candidate, which has implications for how the candidates are evaluated on subsequent outcome variables. It will be interesting if future research could manipulate the extent to which job candidates can appear more (or less) American during the hiring process. Our results do suggest that one point of intervention may be for immigrants to highlight their Americanness during the hiring process. This is a strategy many racial minority members already engaged in through resume "Whitening" (Kang et al., 2016) in an effort to avoid these negative discriminatory consequences. Highlighting one's Americanness may provide similar benefits.

Limitations and future directions

Although the current study has replicated and extended previous ones, it is not without limitations. First, only White individuals participated in our study, so the generalizability of our findings may be limited. Second, the current study is based on one previous study, which may also limit its generalizability. Future research should replicate the current study, as well as extend it by experimentally manipulating prototypicality of Americanness to test its role as a causal factor in outcomes. Relatedly, while our study provided causal evidence for the relation between accent and race on prototypicality, we cannot be certain of the causal effect of prototypicality on subsequent mediators or outcome variables. Thus, the current results should be interpreted with caution.

Conclusion

Our results support previous research that accent has a consistent and negative effect on candidates' hireability. Further, we suggest that this may be due, in part, to them being perceived as less American, which is also influenced by the candidate's race. As we become a more multinational society, there is a need to better understand how accent and race impact individuals' prospects in the hiring process.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

The Authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Research Ethics Statement

The current research (protocol #19-071) was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Mississippi. The researchers followed APA Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct. Participants had the options to proceed with the study or to withdraw from the study after reading the informed consent document.

Data Availability Statement

Survey materials, supplemental results, and data are all available on OSF (https://osf.io/nawru/?view_only=9a4eeda2bc65455e87c8ba0d68a04a19).

Authorship Details

Tuong-Vy C. Nguyen: research concept and design, collection and/or assembly of data, data analysis and interpretation, writing the article, critical revision of the article, final approval of the article. Joseph D. Wellman: research concept and design, collection and/or assembly of data, data analysis and interpretation, writing the article, critical revision of the article, final approval of the article.

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