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Honors Thesis

DIALECT AND EMPLOYABILITY: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

by
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Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment of graduation requirements
for University Honors

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ABSTRACT

DIALECT AND EMPLOYABILITY: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGERS'
PERCEPTIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN ENGLISH

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Bachelor of Arts

This thesis addresses the question of whether different dialects can change the probability of speakers being perceived as employable. It is one of the few that takes this question away from college campuses and directly to Human Resources Managers in the workforce. Using the Matched Guise Technique, recordings of Standard American English (SAE) and African American English (AAE) were presented to forty-two HR Managers from regions across the United States. Using a series of Likert scales, the HR Managers rated the recordings on eight characteristics of employability: four focused on professional skills and four focused on human-relation skills. The study examined different perceptions of the dialects held by the HR managers across regions, across the gender of the speakers, across levels of interaction the applicant is expected to have with the public, and across types of characteristics in the voice samples. Analysis based on paired t-tests showed that, with few exceptions, SAE speakers were rated significantly higher than AAE speakers. This study adds to existing research by analyzing AAE and

SAE generally and with these four variables, reaching participants in the workforce, and touching multiple regions of the United States simultaneously.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables and Figures.....	v
 I. Introduction.....	 1
II. Method.....	3
III. Results.....	6
IV. Discussion.....	15
V. Conclusion.....	19
References.....	21
Appendix A.....	24

LIST OF TABLES/FIGURES

TABLE 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS.....	4
TABLE 2: GENERAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AAE AND SAE WITHIN CATEGORIES.....	7
FIGURE 1: SAE TO AAE RATINGS.....	7
TABLE 3: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AAE AND SAE FOR THE WESTERN REGION.....	8
TABLE 4: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AAE AND SAE FOR NON-WESTERN REGIONS.....	9
TABLE 5: DIFFERENCES IN AAE ACROSS REGIONS.....	9
TABLE 6: DIFFERENCES IN SAE ACROSS REGIONS.....	10
TABLE 7: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AAE AND SAE FOR THE MALE SPEAKER.....	10
TABLE 8: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AAE AND SAE FOR THE FEMALE SPEAKER.....	11
TABLE 9: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDER IN AAE.....	11
TABLE 10: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GENDER IN SAE.....	12
TABLE 11: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AAE AND SAE IN DAILY PUBLIC INTERACTIONS.....	13
TABLE 12: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AAE AND SAE IN LESS THAN DAILY PUBLIC INTERACTIONS.....	13
TABLE 13: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEVELS OF PUBLIC INTERACTION WITHIN AAE.....	14
TABLE 14: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEVELS OF PUBLIC INTERACTION WITHIN SAE.....	14
TABLE 15: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONABLE CHARACTERISTICS.....	15

TABLE 16: DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DIALECTS IN TYPES OF CHARACTERISTICS...	15
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Introduction

Dialect can be a defining factor in individual identity and socioeconomic class.

Dragojevik, Mastro, and Giles (2016:60) define dialects as “language varieties marked by a specific grammar and vocabulary, in addition to pronunciation.” Throughout the world, dialects have separated speaker in-groups from speaker out-groups, both supporting and eroding cultural identities. Some minority language, dialect, and cultural groups such as the Runa people in Ecuador, residents of some counties in northern England, and various Native American tribes in North America have focused on maintaining in-group culture (Nuckolls & Swanson 2014; Newmark, Walker, & Stanford 2016; Trudgill 2016).

However, more commonly the standard variety of the dominant language has been encouraged and even enforced in public schools (King & Scott 2014; Kramer, Miller, & Newberger 2008).

In America, a largely stigmatized dialect is African American English (AAE). In most situations, AAE is considered one of the least prestigious dialects of American English, while Standard American English (SAE) is considered the most prestigious. In media, AAE is most commonly associated with villains, violent characters, drug addicts, and other less-desirable characters (Lippi-Green 1997; Dragojevik, Mastro, Giles, & Sink 2016). Lippi-Green concludes her research by saying that in the Disney film *The Lion King*, “AAE speakers occupy the dark and frightening places” (which refers to the hyenas), while Simba “belongs on the sunny savannah where SAE speakers like his father live” (1997:122). While the hyenas were outcasts in *The Lion King*, Simba was supposed to be standard, or even considered correct, in both speech and character. Outside the realm of media, various experiments have been conducted that support the

idea that AAE is generally rated lower than SAE in both status and solidarity characteristics (Calhoun 2011; Campbell-Kibler 2007; Cargile, Takai & Rodriguez 2006). The ratings are not always uniform, though. In Cargile, Takai & Rodriguez (2006), AAE was rated low for socioeconomic status, but high in attractiveness, or personability.

The current study looks specifically at the dialect perceptions between SAE and AAE in employment situations. Similar research has been performed on college campuses, supporting the theory that SAE is rated higher than AAE in terms of general acceptability (Calhoun 2011; Cargile 2000). These studies emphasized again the idea in Cargile, Takai & Rodriguez (2006) that AAE can be considered attractive, but in the latter two studies AAE was also perceived as unintelligent. From these studies it appears that a common perception is that non-standard dialects, specifically AAE, are equivalent to a low socioeconomic status. This perception of dialect could have an effect on the perceived employability of an applicant, which hasn't been researched thoroughly at this time. One study was conducted using the employment telephone interview register, and showed that AAE speakers had to apply to fifty times more positions than SAE speakers before they received a call back (Cochiara, Bell, & Casper 2016).

The current study furthers the research on dialect perceptions of AAE in employment situations. It is one of the first of its kind, focusing on Human Resource Managers' perceptions of dialects, and covers multiple regions of the United States, whereas previous studies were usually on college campuses and focused on one or maybe two regions of the United States at a time. The main research question is : Will Human

Resource Managers from across the United States rate AAE speakers less employable than SAE speakers? This main question is further divided into four sub-questions.

- 1) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on region of the United States where the HR manager conducts interviews?
- 2) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on applicants' gender?
- 3) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on how often applicants are expected to interact with the public?
- 4) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on whether the employer is focusing on more professional or personable characteristics in employment positions?

I hypothesized, in each of these cases, that AAE would be rated lower than SAE.

Method

Participants

The respondents were forty-two Human Resources managers from listservs such as HRDIV_NET, LERA-L, LERA-WHR¹, as well as two randomly selected chapters of the Society of Human Resources Managers from each state in the United States. They were contacted via email, and respondents participated in the study by completing a survey. Five responses were not used due to incomplete surveys, or the respondents were not hiring within the United States, leaving thirty-seven responses in the data set. Using the United States Census as a guide for demographics, all respondents reported that their race was White, four were from the Midwest, ten were from the Northeast, four were

¹ Human Resource Division listserv, Labor and Employment Relations Association listserv, Labor and Employment Relations Association: Work and Human Resources Network listserv

from the South, and nineteen were from the West. One respondent was in the age range 18-24 years old, 11 were in the age range 25-44, 17 were in the age range 45-64, and 8 were over 65 years old. Nine of the respondents were female, and twenty-eight were male. Five respondents were not currently involved in conducting interviews with prospective employees, while the other 32 reported that they were actively interviewing. This information is consolidated in Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants. Participants were compensated for their time by voluntarily entering a drawing for a \$20 gift card to Outback Steakhouse, which three of the participants received at the conclusion of the study.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

	Male				Female			
<i>Age groups</i>	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+	18-24	25-44	45-64	65+
	1	4	15	8	0	7	2	0
<i>Region</i>	West	Midwest	Northeast	South	West	Midwest	Northeast	South
	19	2	4	3	0	2	6	1
<i>Actively Involved in Hiring Process</i>	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	25		3		7		2	
<i>Total Number of Participants</i>	28				9			

Materials

Using the Matched Guise Technique as described in Hua (2015), basic vocal features that may affect ratings (such as timbre, pitch, and quality) were controlled by having the same speakers say the same thing in two different dialects. This controls any variation that may occur with using different speakers in different dialects. By using the same speaker for both AAE and SAE, the Matched Guise Technique allows the

researcher to focus in on the characteristics of the dialect as opposed to characteristics of the speaker. Since AAE is a dialect often associated with people of African American ethnicity, using the Matched Guise Technique allows us to separate the speech patterns from other characteristics of the speaker, as the same speaker uses both AAE and SAE. Two speakers were recruited who could code-switch between AAE and SAE. One was male and one was female. Ethnically, the female was African American, while the male speaker was White. Having both genders represented as speakers in this research was key, as most prior research done with perspectives on dialects have only used one or the other gender (Cargile et. al 2006; Calhoun 2011). Having two different ethnicities represented as speakers allows us to explore the relationship between dialect and ethnicity.

The speakers were asked to answer three typical hiring questions in both AAE and SAE. Their responses were recorded. On a scale measuring the strength of the AAE dialect, the male speaker's dialect was heavier than the female speaker's dialect, using AAE features more often. Both speakers used the construct "I got" in places where SAE speakers use "I have," used [ɪn] more often than [ɪŋ], and used [d] where SAE speakers often use [θ]. The speakers also used occasional verb aspects that aren't found in SAE, such as "I would done say." The authenticity of the speakers' recordings was tested by presenting the recordings in a random order to several listeners. The listeners gave free responses on what dialect they thought the speakers were using. For each speaker, the correct dialects of AAE or SAE were identified. The speakers' recorded responses were not controlled other than requesting that the speakers gave contextually similar responses in each dialect. The freedom given to the speakers allowed them to use lexical,

syntactical, and pragmatical forms that they thought appropriate for each dialect. The questions and responses are included in Appendix A.

Procedure

The survey was created and distributed using Qualtrics software (Qualtrics, 2015) and analyzed in Microsoft Excel (2016). The survey asked for demographic information, variations of hiring experiences and job requirements followed by ratings of the recordings from the two speakers. Each participant heard only the female speaker for one question and only the male speaker for another question. Each participant listened to a total of six recordings: the same speaker's response in both dialects per question. Following each listening task, the participant was asked to rate the speaker on eight characteristics of employability, following Cargile's (2000) model. These characteristics included both professional and personable skills: Responsible, Respectful, Reliable, Organized (professional skills), Intelligent, Polite, Kind, and Likeable (personable skills).

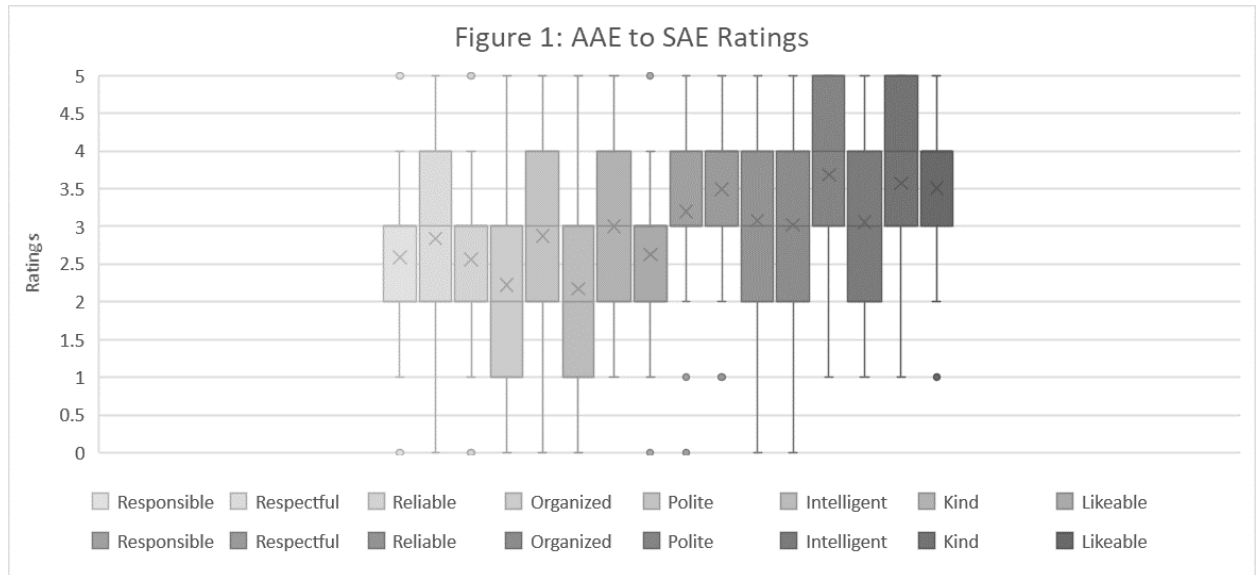
Results

General Findings

A t-test was conducted on HR manager ratings of SAE and AAE generally. As expected from previous studies (Calhoun 2011; Campbell-Kibler 2007; Cargile, Takai & Rodriguez 2006; Cargile 2000), SAE was rated significantly higher than AAE in all characteristics as shown in Table 2: General Differences between AAE and SAE within Categories. Figure 1: AAE to SAE Ratings shows these differences in a box-plot.

Table 2: General Differences between AAE and SAE within Categories

Categorical Traits	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Responsible	2.59	1.14	3.20	1.14	$p < 0.000^{**23}$
Respectful	2.84	1.25	3.50	1.04	$p < 0.000^{**}$
Reliable	2.56	1.11	3.07	1.12	$p < 0.001^{**}$
Organized	2.23	1.27	3.02	1.22	$p < 0.000^{**}$
Polite	2.87	1.26	3.68	1.10	$p < 0.000^{**}$
Intelligent	2.17	1.28	3.05	1.09	$p < 0.000^{**}$
Kind	3.00	1.10	3.57	1.17	$p < 0.000^{**}$
Likeable	2.62	1.29	3.50	1.13	$p < 0.000^{**}$



Region

T-tests were performed on the participants' ratings for each characteristic between the regions of the Western United States and other regions of the United States. These two categories were selected because the majority of the participants worked in the

² ** shows significance at $p < 0.05$. * shows marginal significance at $p < 0.1$. This same notation is used throughout the document.

³ T-tests were used throughout the experiment to analyze the data, where an ANOVA test would have more accurately described the data. Any p-values over 0.001 may not actually be significant.

Western United States. The only way to equally compare the regions was to combine all Non-Western regions into one group. Multiple t-tests were run looking at the differences both between regional groups within each dialect, and between dialects within each regional group.

A significant difference was found between AAE and SAE within the Western Region in each characteristic, as shown in Table 3: Differences between AAE and SAE for the Western Region.

Table 3: Differences between AAE and SAE for the Western Region

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.28	1.04	3.16	1.25	p<0.000**
<i>Respectful</i>	2.52	1.26	3.53	1.11	p<0.000**
<i>Reliable</i>	2.35	1.13	3.09	1.19	p<0.001**
<i>Organized</i>	1.96	1.23	3.00	1.25	p<0.000**
<i>Polite</i>	2.54	1.30	3.76	1.25	p<0.000**
<i>Intelligent</i>	1.72	1.17	3.00	1.17	p<0.000**
<i>Kind</i>	2.74	1.15	3.51	1.24	p<0.001**
<i>Likeable</i>	2.28	1.23	3.63	1.36	p<0.000**

The results between dialects in the Non-Western Regions were statistically significant in five characteristics. These five characteristics were: Responsible, Organized, Polite, Intelligent, and Likeable. Marginal significance was found in three characteristics. These three characteristics were: Respectful, Reliable, and Kind. These results are shown in Table 4: Differences between AAE and SAE for Non-Western Regions.

Table 4: Differences between AAE and SAE for Non-Western Regions

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.80	1.19	3.19	1.05	p<0.04**
<i>Respectful</i>	3.05	1.25	3.40	1.00	p<0.08*
<i>Reliable</i>	2.66	1.07	2.95	1.09	p<0.08*
<i>Organized</i>	2.37	1.24	2.93	1.18	p<0.01**
<i>Polite</i>	3.15	1.16	3.62	0.95	p<0.02**
<i>Intelligent</i>	2.46	1.29	3.05	1.00	p<0.01**
<i>Kind</i>	3.17	0.99	3.57	1.12	p<0.06*
<i>Likeable</i>	2.83	1.32	3.40	0.93	p<0.01**

A significant difference was found between regions' ratings of AAE in all characteristics but one. Marginal significance was found between regions' ratings of AAE in the characteristic Organized. These results are shown in Table 5: Differences in AAE Across Regions.

Table 5: Differences in AAE Across Regions

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	Western Region		Non-Western Regions		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.28	1.04	2.80	1.19	p<0.01**
<i>Respectful</i>	2.52	1.26	3.05	1.25	p<0.02**
<i>Reliable</i>	2.35	1.13	2.66	1.07	p<0.04**
<i>Organized</i>	1.96	1.23	2.37	1.24	p<0.05*
<i>Polite</i>	2.54	1.30	3.15	1.16	p<0.01**
<i>Intelligent</i>	1.72	1.17	2.46	1.29	p<0.000**
<i>Kind</i>	2.74	1.15	3.17	0.99	p<0.03**
<i>Likeable</i>	2.28	1.23	2.83	1.32	p<0.02**

None of the results of the regions' ratings for SAE were significant in any of the characteristics. These results are shown in Table 6: Differences in SAE Across Regions.

Table 6: Differences in SAE Across Regions

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	Western Region		Non-Western Regions		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	3.16	1.25	3.19	1.05	p<0.36
<i>Respectful</i>	3.53	1.11	3.40	1.00	p<0.31
<i>Reliable</i>	3.09	1.19	2.95	1.09	p<0.43
<i>Organized</i>	3.00	1.25	2.93	1.18	p<0.44
<i>Polite</i>	3.76	1.25	3.62	0.95	p<0.39
<i>Intelligent</i>	3.00	1.17	3.05	1.00	p<0.26
<i>Kind</i>	3.51	1.24	3.57	1.12	p<0.47
<i>Likeable</i>	3.63	1.36	3.40	0.93	p<0.21

Gender

T-tests were performed on the participants' ratings for each characteristic between the two speakers. This was done to compare the difference in rating between gender, as one speaker was male and the other was female. Multiple t-tests were run looking at the differences both between gender within each dialect, and between dialects within each gender.

In each characteristic, there was a significant difference between the dialects for the male speaker, as shown in Table 7: Differences between AAE and SAE for the Male Speaker.

Table 7: Differences between AAE and SAE for the Male Speaker

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.33	1.10	3.27	1.22	p<0.000**
<i>Respectful</i>	2.55	1.35	3.64	0.99	p<0.000**
<i>Reliable</i>	2.35	1.15	3.16	1.16	p<0.000**
<i>Organized</i>	2.02	1.30	3.16	1.25	p<0.000**
<i>Polite</i>	2.53	1.29	3.84	1.07	p<0.000**
<i>Intelligent</i>	1.85	1.23	3.20	1.01	p<0.000**
<i>Kind</i>	2.78	1.14	3.79	1.15	p<0.000**
<i>Likeable</i>	2.35	1.38	3.68	1.10	p<0.000**

For the female speaker, none of the characteristics were found to be statistically significant between dialects, as shown in Table 8: Differences between AAE and SAE for the Female Speaker.

Table 8: Differences between AAE and SAE for the Female Speaker

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.97	1.09	3.10	1.01	p<0.30
<i>Respectful</i>	3.26	0.94	3.28	1.06	p<0.47
<i>Reliable</i>	2.87	0.98	2.95	1.04	p<0.37
<i>Organized</i>	2.53	1.16	2.82	1.15	p<0.14
<i>Polite</i>	3.37	1.04	3.46	1.11	p<0.35
<i>Intelligent</i>	2.63	1.22	2.85	1.17	p<0.22
<i>Kind</i>	3.32	0.95	3.26	1.13	p<0.40
<i>Likeable</i>	3.03	1.04	3.26	1.13	p<0.18

In each characteristic, there was a significant difference between the perceptions of the male and female speakers in AAE, as shown in Table 9: Differences between Gender in AAE.

Table 9: Differences between Gender in AAE

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	Male Speaker		Female Speaker		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.33	1.10	2.97	1.09	p<0.000**
<i>Respectful</i>	2.55	1.35	3.26	0.94	p<0.002**
<i>Reliable</i>	2.35	1.15	2.87	0.98	p<0.01**
<i>Organized</i>	2.02	1.30	2.53	1.16	p<0.03**
<i>Polite</i>	2.53	1.29	3.37	1.04	p<0.000**
<i>Intelligent</i>	1.85	1.23	2.63	1.22	p<0.002**
<i>Kind</i>	2.78	1.14	3.32	0.95	p<0.01**
<i>Likeable</i>	2.35	1.38	3.03	1.04	p<0.004**

In SAE, there was a significant difference between the perception of male and female speakers in four characteristics. These four characteristics were: Respectful,

Polite, Kind, and Likeable. In two characteristics there was minimal significant difference. These two characteristics were: Organized and Intelligent. In two characteristics there was no significance between the two genders in SAE. These were: Responsible and Reliable. These results are all compiled in Table 10: Differences between Gender in SAE.

Table 10: Differences between Gender in SAE

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	Male Speaker		Female Speaker		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	3.27	1.22	3.10	1.01	p<0.05**
<i>Respectful</i>	3.64	0.99	3.28	1.06	p<0.47
<i>Reliable</i>	3.16	1.16	2.95	1.04	p<0.18
<i>Organized</i>	3.16	1.25	2.82	1.15	p<0.09*
<i>Polite</i>	3.84	1.07	3.46	1.11	p<0.05**
<i>Intelligent</i>	3.20	1.01	2.85	1.17	p<0.07*
<i>Kind</i>	3.79	1.15	3.26	1.13	p<0.01**
<i>Likeable</i>	3.68	1.10	3.26	1.13	p<0.04**

Public Interaction

T-tests were performed on the participants' ratings for each characteristic between levels of public interaction. As with the regional categories, two main groups became evident from the survey results: those of the applicants who were intended to interact with the public on a daily basis and those who would interact with the public on a less than daily basis. This was done to compare the difference in rating between job types that interacted either more or less with the public. Multiple t-tests were run looking at the differences both between the two public interaction levels within each dialect, and between dialects within each public interaction level.

In all but one characteristic, the difference between dialect was statistically significant, in the realm of daily interaction with the public, as shown in Table 11:

Differences between AAE and SAE in Daily Public Interactions. The difference between dialect for the characteristic Reliable was marginally significant.

Table 11: Differences between AAE and SAE in Daily Public Interactions

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.88	1.00	3.33	1.11	p<0.02**
<i>Respectful</i>	3.10	1.09	3.59	0.99	p<0.01**
<i>Reliable</i>	2.90	0.91	3.24	1.13	p<0.05*
<i>Organized</i>	2.53	1.09	3.04	1.17	p<0.01**
<i>Polite</i>	3.12	1.12	3.76	1.08	p<0.002**
<i>Intelligent</i>	2.37	1.24	3.02	1.13	p<0.004**
<i>Kind</i>	3.14	1.05	3.67	1.11	p<0.01**
<i>Likeable</i>	2.90	1.22	3.51	1.16	p<0.01**

In all the characteristics, the difference between dialects was significant within the realm of less than daily interaction with the public. These results are shown in Table 12:

Differences between AAE and SAE in Less Than Daily Public Interactions.

Table 12: Differences between AAE and SAE in Less Than Daily Public Interactions

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.27	1.19	3.05	1.15	p<0.001**
<i>Respectful</i>	2.55	1.34	3.39	1.07	p<0.001**
<i>Reliable</i>	2.18	1.19	2.89	1.07	p<0.002**
<i>Organized</i>	1.89	1.37	3.00	1.28	p<0.000**
<i>Polite</i>	2.59	1.35	3.59	1.11	p<0.000**
<i>Intelligent</i>	1.95	1.30	3.09	1.04	p<0.000**
<i>Kind</i>	2.84	1.13	3.45	1.21	p<0.01**
<i>Likeable</i>	2.32	1.31	3.50	1.10	p<0.000**

For six of the characteristics, the difference between levels of public interaction within AAE were statistically significant. The six significant characteristics were:

Responsible, Respectful, Reliable, Organized, Polite, and Likeable. The characteristic

Intelligent was marginally significant, and the characteristic Kind was not statistically significant. These results are shown in Table 13: Differences between Levels of Public Interaction within AAE.

Table 13: Differences between Levels of Public Interaction within AAE

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	Daily Public Interaction		Less Than Daily Public Interaction		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	2.88	1.00	2.27	1.19	p<0.01**
<i>Respectful</i>	3.10	1.09	2.55	1.34	p<0.02**
<i>Reliable</i>	2.90	0.91	2.18	1.19	p<0.001**
<i>Organized</i>	2.53	1.09	1.89	1.37	p<0.01**
<i>Polite</i>	3.12	1.12	2.59	1.35	p<0.02**
<i>Intelligent</i>	2.37	1.24	1.95	1.30	p<0.06*
<i>Kind</i>	3.14	1.05	2.84	1.13	p<0.10
<i>Likeable</i>	2.90	1.22	2.32	1.31	p<0.02**

Marginal significance was found in the difference between levels of public interaction for SAE for the characteristic Reliable. All other characteristics were not statistically significant. These characteristics were: Responsible, Respectful, Organized, Polite, Intelligent, Kind, and Likeable. These results are shown in Table 14: Differences between Levels of Public Interaction within SAE.

Table 14: Differences between Levels of Public Interaction within SAE

<i>Categorical Traits</i>	Daily Public Interaction		Less Than Daily Public Interaction		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Responsible</i>	3.33	1.11	3.05	1.15	p<0.11
<i>Respectful</i>	3.59	0.99	3.39	1.07	p<0.18
<i>Reliable</i>	3.24	1.13	2.89	1.07	p<0.07*
<i>Organized</i>	3.04	1.17	3.00	1.28	p<0.44
<i>Polite</i>	3.76	1.08	3.59	1.11	p<0.22
<i>Intelligent</i>	3.02	1.13	3.09	1.04	p<0.38
<i>Kind</i>	3.67	1.11	3.45	1.21	p<0.19
<i>Likeable</i>	3.51	1.16	3.50	1.10	p<0.48

Characteristics

The characteristics that were used to measure the difference between AAE and SAE fall under two categories: professional and personable. This difference was also analyzed using a t-test of significance between the two dialects. The difference between professional characteristics and personable characteristics within AAE was found to be statistically significant. The difference between professional and personable characteristics within SAE was found to be statistically significant. These results are shown in Table 15: Differences between Professional and Personable Characteristics.

Table 15: Differences between Professional and Personable Characteristics

	Professional		Personable		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>AAE</i>	2.39	1.22	2.82	1.24	0.000**
<i>SAE</i>	3.09	1.15	3.56	1.11	0.000**

The difference between AAE and SAE within professional characteristics was found to be statistically significant. Likewise, the difference between AAE and SAE within personable characteristics was found to be statistically significant. These results are shown in Table 16: Difference between Dialects in Types of Characteristics.

Table 16: Differences between Dialects in Types of Characteristics

	AAE		SAE		p-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<i>Professional</i>	2.39	1.22	3.09	1.15	0.000**
<i>Personable</i>	2.83	1.24	3.56	1.11	0.000**

Discussion

In general, the research questions were answered and the hypotheses were supported. On the whole, AAE is rated lower than SAE by HR managers. When looking

at the sub-questions, however, we find more interesting details. Again, these sub-questions were:

- 1) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on region of the United States where the HR manager conducts interviews?
- 2) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on applicants' gender?
- 3) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on how often applicants are expected to interact with the public?
- 4) Will the perception of AAE and SAE change depending on whether the employer is focusing on more professional or personable characteristics in employment positions?

In answer to the first question, it appears that there is a different perception among HR managers depending on their region. In the end, about half of the respondents were from one region of the United States (West), and the other half were scattered across the nation. Because of this, the analysis compares the Western region to the mean of the other regions combined, which included Midwest (4), South (4), Northeast (10). As the results showed, the Western region rated AAE significantly lower than the combined values of the other regions for AAE. This could be because the Western region of the United States has less interaction with speakers of AAE than many other regions of the United States. As exposure increases, perhaps the difference in ratings for AAE across regions would become smaller as well. Further research could be done in this area to explore the changes based on exposure. For example, a longitudinal study could be conducted on a few HR managers, measuring their perceptions of AAE over time as they are more exposed to various dialects.

The second sub-question also revealed results which are supported by various sociolinguistic studies involving gender: namely that female speakers often use more prestigious language than male speakers (Labov 1990; Bourmal 2016). In AAE, the differences in each characteristic between the two genders was statistically significant. When the SAE results were compared to each other, the difference between the two gendered ratings were only statistically significant in the characteristics “Likeable” and “Kind.” This means that, in either dialect, females are rated higher than males, though the difference is minimal in SAE. In general, the listed ratings from highest to lowest are female SAE, male SAE, female AAE, and male AAE.

One interesting finding is that there was no significant difference between the two recordings of the female speaker. She was rated nearly identically in each dialect. These results suggest two different conclusions. One, that females are generally rated higher than males regardless of dialect. Or two, that the male speaker’s own perception of AAE influenced his recordings. Because the speakers were given the freedom to principally write their own script, there is the chance that speaker bias could have influenced the results. Both speakers changed more than just dialect when they code-switched; they changed their posture, air of confidence, and level of familiarity shared with the researcher. This was a potential issue from the beginning of the experiment, but we continued with the self-invented script to allow for more natural flow of speech and the usage of natural syntactic, pragmatic, and lexical forms for each dialect. Since this extreme difference only occurred for the male speaker, who learned AAE as a second dialect, it could be that the male speaker was overcompensating with use of dialectal forms that native speakers don’t often use. Further research could explore this

phenomenon by increasing the number of speakers, both male and female from various ethnic backgrounds, similar to Campbell-Kibler's study (2007).

The results to the third question were surprising, as it was hypothesized that employees who were expected to work more with the public would be rated lower in AAE than those who would interact less with the public. We based this hypothesis on the idea that jobs such as computer engineers would not need to communicate much with the public, and so HR managers wouldn't be concerned as much with how they spoke. On the other extreme, a receptionist would constantly be speaking with the public, and therefore their dialect could be of more import. Seeing that AAE is commonly rated lower than SAE, it was thought that HR managers might rate AAE speakers higher when they wouldn't interact much with the public in the work-place. Our results showed the opposite was true. AAE was more acceptable in more public positions than in positions with less public interaction. A possible explanation for this could be connected to the idea proposed in Cargile's study (2000) which showed that AAE is perceived as being a more friendly/attractive dialect than SAE. When the employee is expected to interact with people more often, SAE is still preferred overall, but AAE is more acceptable than usual.

The final sub question breaks down the methods of our research, looking into the different ratings for particular characteristics. The results suggested that SAE is rated higher than AAE in both personal and professional categories, but also in both dialects personable characteristics were rated higher than professional characteristics. The results across dialects were expected, with SAE rated higher as the standard dialect. The results about the characteristics gives us new information, though, as few studies have compared the difference in personable vs. professional characteristics of dialects before. Studies

have looked into comparisons concerning whether one dialect was perceived as friendlier or more intelligent than another (Cargile, Takai, & Rodríguez 2006; Cargile 2000), but not at the perceptions of the characteristics themselves. The results of the present study suggest that personable characteristics are rated higher than professional characteristics, which could bring us to anthropological and sociological questions such as whether people in the United States, or people in general, value personal connection more than professional skills. If this were true, this study would show that even in professional situations, such as during hiring interviews, being personable is more valuable than simply having professional skills.

Conclusion

As expected from previous experiments, HR managers followed a trend of rating AAE lower than SAE (Calhoun 2011; Campbell-Kibler 2007; Cargile, Takai & Rodríguez 2006). This study reinforces the idea that AAE is rated less than SAE specifically in the employment field, with various insights based on analysis of the region of the country where the HR managers worked, the gender of the speaker, how often the potential employee was expected to interact with the public, and the difference between ratings of professional and personable skills. Our results showed that HR managers from the Western United States rated AAE lower than those from other regions, the male speaker was rated lower than the female speaker in both dialects, AAE was rated higher for positions where the employee would interact more with the public, and personable characteristics are typically rated higher than professional characteristics.

There was one sub-question in our research that we were unable to answer because of the demographics of the respondents. The question was, “Will the perception

of AAE and SAE change depending on the position's level of prestige?" The survey included a question about whether the HR manager typically hired for blue collar or white collar jobs, but only eight out of the 42 respondents hired mainly for blue collar jobs; therefore, we could not thoroughly analyze this question in this study. Also, the ratio of male to female participants was also not reflective of the population of HR managers in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, in 2017 the ratio of men to women in the field of HR managers was 26:74 (DeWolf). Our ratio of male to female among the participants was 79:21. Further research should be conducted to explore the question of perceptions of AAE and SAE both with a larger number of female participants, and with a focus on the difference between hiring for blue collar or white collar jobs.

As the first of its kind to focus on Human Resource Managers' perceptions of dialects in the employment field, this study can be used as a starting point to further understand biases in real world situations. As discussed in the beginning of this article, dialect can be intimately connected with identity. If the relationship between dialect and identity is better understood, the relationship's impact can become clear in daily situations. Bias and first-impression assumptions are common, but if society recognizes these biases, there can be more equality in society as a whole, and in the hiring process in particular.

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APPENDIX A⁴

Question 1: What are some of your professional strengths?

Female AAE

Umm...I've got experience in marketing and some customer service, if you know. I write, I write a ton, but I think that's why I got the jobs that I do. I work in marketing and, um, I work with- I'm an assistant to a boss. And my boss, I work with him a lot on marketing planning and things like that. Mmm-Sometimes I do other things. Like, I used to do customer service. When I did customer service I did a lot of one on one and one to six hundred, one to two hundred. And I know how to talk to people. And I know to inspire people. Um I've definitely gained a lot of experience. Not know anything. I have done an internship, but uh, kind a beginning business, a Startup really. I'm learning information systems. I've trained people. I've managed people. I've worked in a lot of different professional settings.

Female SAE

My skills vary from my marketing experience and my customer service experience, all of which I've dealt with clients and I've dealt with different client size. I've been in management, um I've done things like that. I have strong writing skill, and that goes hand in hand with my major: advertising. I have conducted market data research and I've done market planning as well and strategizing future marketing best practices. I've trained and managed a catering crew, to **write** catering to different clientele.

I think I've used a lot of creative solutions with little resource to fix problems. I have also done an internship where I received training on how to have client relationships for **keeping in** in interior design.

I've also made template for a small business to use to use on digital marketing for their really. As well as planning community outreach to provide marketing opportunities. And I've volunteered a lot and I've done a lot of service, and I think I'm able to inspire people through communicating. And I've been able to do that through my writing and through my management.

Male AAE

So I would done say that my personal professional strengths would have to be the fact that I am more inclusive with everyone around me, you know I like to let everyone around me come on in and I like to have everyone feel they're a part of my place, and that they can include to my hood and be part with me. I just don't feel like, you know

⁴ Bold and ellipses show where the researcher was uncertain of the exact words the speakers said. Bold shows what the researcher guessed the speaker said, and ellipses were too difficult to predict what was said.

everyone needs be a part of that. I want everyone to feel good and real feel like they'd want to come ... I want everyone to have a big piece of me, and I think that's a real big strength that will help everyone come down to ...

Male SAE

I would say some of my professional strengths would be my ability to include people. When I was putting together my resume, I asked for people to help me out. And on it I put inclusive, because my friend Jo she told me that I'm the most inclusive person that she knows. And so I thought that was really cool. She told me that I just really want everyone to be a part of it, on the group. I think in team settings that's a really big, valuable thing, and to have everyone feel like they're a part of, their piece matters, is really important.

Question 2: What's the most difficult problem you had to solve in a work environment, and how did you solve it?

Female AAE

So, one day at work, I was just startin out, and my boss likes to leave me 'cause he trusts me, and we had this other boss, he was the chef, that liked to do things a certain way. He liked to save money on the food. But his idea of saving money is not even buyin the food in the first place. And so we, as caterers, our only job is to help them get food. And you're telling me that he is not gonna buy any food? So let me get back to the story. So several times, we had guests complain to us that they did not get enough food. And I would ask the chef to make more food, and he would say, "No, we're trying to save money." But then, they would come to him, and then he would make the food and just be like "I-I made a little a little mistake in my measurements." So then, one day I was thinking, "hey we should try to get some higher stars in our catering rating." So I go up to this chef and I asked, "Can we work together to get five star rating?" He was like "Oh, that's a good idea." And I was like, "Hmm What can gives us five stars? What if we gave them an abundance of food?" And he was like "Oh, that's a good idea." So then, we decided to start making more food so that people would feel like we really cared about them. But little did he know, that I just wanted to be able to feed everyone that came. But luckily, it worked. And I think that was one way that my communication skills really came through.

Female SAE

I used to work, um, as a catering managing assistant, and at this place, I had like kinda like two supervisors, but I really reported to one. But he wasn't there a lot, he just trusted me to keep things together. And the other supervisor was the chef. And he was in charge of all the cooks. And we used to serve people from like 2 hundred, ten, to like 600 people. This man would plan, he was like "I'm gonna save money, I'm gonna save money, and I'm gonna make it cheaper for everyone, so I'll just make less food." Which yes, it was cheaper, but that's because we weren't making enough food. So we would go

through and we would do- it's a buffet, most of the time. Unless it was a small group we would do buffet style. And so, if you run out of food, that's the worst thing that can happen. That's your only job, is to give food to people. And so we would kinda get at it. I would be like "Okay, do you have enough food?" And he would just say, "We made exactly enough for people to get two servings." And I'd have to explain, "I'm sorry, but people have been taking more than what you expected, Could we make more food?" It would take like until people would start coming up to him, I would refer people to him. And then he would go and make food because then he realized people wanted more food. And so it was about halfway through my time there, it was a summer job. And So I said, You know, Maybe we could raise up our stars, when people rate the catering people. And he's like, "Oh, that's a good idea." I think to raise up our stars, we just need an abundance of food. And he was like "Oh, yeah, that's true." And that is how we agreed on something, which in halfway helped us fix our problems.

Male AAE

So I like had a boss like one time, he like came around here. He was so rude to everybody, he was just like so rude, and like. None of us felt like we had anything to contribute, and I felt like that was a big problem that I had to deal with while working in the work fields. And like, I just didn't understand him and he didn't understand me and so I felt like we needed to come together and do good things for him, help him feel like he's a real guy too, you know what I mean. Just come out for him and make him feel like we bruddas, and like we do things all together, and so like I-Brother gotta brother us out. And so, when I like did things for him, he did things for me and I made him feel real good, and like, you know. I mean, I saw that problem, because then he started having a bigger heart towards everyone you know. It's all about love and family, all about love and family, all about love and family in here, and you know, we help each other.

Male SAE

I would say one of the most difficult problems that I've had to face in a work environment was having a boss that was actually really rude, and he was not cordial at all, and he was very unprofessional and he made everyone around him feel worthless, and to solve this I realized that he's a human and all humans want love and affection. So one of the things that I did was I just found ways to serve him. I went out of my way to get to work early each day to straighten up him desk, cause he always hated when his desk was a mess. So I just did little things that actually went out to be a big thing. I would invite him to lunch, or I would buy him lunch one day, just small things to show that people cared about him. And I realized that as we did that he became more and more easier to work with and he was more understanding because he felt like people actually cared about him.

Question 3: Out of all the other candidates, why should we hire you?

Female AAE

I think that you should hire me because I've learned a lot, but I have a lot to learn. I know what it means to work hard to understand something, and I think that will make a difference in your workplace if you have someone that know what it's like to not know anything, but come back and learn everything that you want me to know.

Female SAE

I would hire me because I definitely have learned a lot, but I also know that I have a lot to learn. That's something that I've easily learned from being in school. And if you look at my resume, I don't have the highest GPA, that's true. But that's because I'm here to learn new things, not to review. So if you're looking for someone that will acquire all the skills you want and try to acquire even more skills from this job, it would be me.

Male AAE

You know man, I feel like I'm better than everybody else around here. That you should hire me just because you know I'm gonna help everybody out here and I'm gonna be more teachable and I'm gonna be the one that's like hey-yo I go full, and you gonna tell me something and I'm gonna do it. And we're gonna help each other and like I'm just so teachable that you can help me and I can help you. And like I'm willing to just go with the flow, and like things change. Things change. And you just have to like, you know, figure out what they're gonna be and you can just have to figure out and like realize that everything's not the same everyday. And like you just come around and help each other to grow and prosper and feel like, you got skills and I got skills, and you help me learn your skills that you want me to be more better, and you I teach you a little bit and you teach me a little bit and we gonna thrive together. That's just gonna help me do better than everyone around you.

Male SAE

You should hire me out of all your other candidates because I'm the most adaptable person that I know. Being in this industry, there's change almost every day it seems like. You have to be quick and you have to be willing to adapt and that's something that I really strive to do and make sure that I understand skills and that I take the time to figure out things on my own, but also go with the flow because everything's changing everyday, and so I really take pride in knowing that I can adapt and make things easy, transitioned.