

Name Discrimination in the Recruitment Process by Recruiters

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Abstract

Literature reviews have brought attention to the discrimination towards names in the recruitment process by recruiters where these individuals are not considered for employment. In order to examine this phenomenon from the literature, an ethnographic study was conducted of the perceptions of recruiters through participant observation and a semi-structured interview during a period of three months. This study conducted a semi-structured interview with 20 recruiters who were a member of SHRM and a local chapter of SHRM in the state of Florida. A gap from the literature in furthering research in seeking what perceptions recruiters have towards first names of a perceived socioeconomic status associated with the first name is examined. The findings indicate the recruiter's perceptions have an impact towards those with unusual and ethnic first names.

Keywords: discrimination, bias, perceptions, recruiters, socioeconomic status

1. Introduction

The study was to determine if Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) members who are Human Resource (HR) professionals with hiring responsibilities do react to an applicant's ethnic first name in a negative way due to the unfamiliarity and the unlikability of the name, and because the HR professional associates ethnic first names with people from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds or with people who have certain "negative" characteristics. These individuals may not be aware of their own personal biases and prejudices towards ethnic first names when these names appear on job applications or during selection, recruitment, and hiring. The bias and discrimination may range from the unfamiliarity of the name, the unlikability of the name, and a perceived socioeconomic status of the ethnic first name, and the characteristics of a person associated with an ethnic name.

Therefore, the purpose of this ethnographic study is to empirically examine recruiter's perceptions towards common, unusual, and ethnic first names. The focus was on the recruiter's perceptions towards first names whereas if the first names were familiar, unfamiliar, likeable, or unlikeable and to seek if the recruiter's had perceptions of a socioeconomic status of their first name compared to other first names. Through observations, discussions, and semi-structured interviews, the findings with a number of literature reviews will reveal discrimination is occurring by recruiter's towards first names wherein those names would not receive a callback or interview. Also, the gap presented in Cotton, O'Neill, and Griffin's (2008) study is addressed of how recruiter's perceive their own first name to other first names in rating each into a socioeconomic status.

2. Theoretical Background

The empirical study of Bertrand and Mullainathan's research (2004) found that "white names receive 50 percent more callbacks for interviews" (p. 991). Bertrand and Mullainathan also noted that in the US there is strong evidence that job applications receive different treatment based on the applicant's race. Bursell (2007) administered a test in Sweden, where it showed "discrimination in job interview offers compared with the call-back rates for fictitious job applications with Swedish sounding names and foreign sounding names" (p. 3), whereas the Swedish sounding names had a higher rate of callback. Cotton et al. (2008) studied the difference between Jamal, an ethnic name, and James, a non-ethnic name. They found that James was selected more often than Jamal. Research has revealed hiring professionals' biases towards ethnic first names works as a sort of "filtering system" which prevents the applicant with an ethnic first name from receiving a callback or an interview. In a study conducted by Cotton et al. (2008) the researchers state "how the uniqueness and ethnicity of first names influence affective reactions to those names and their potential for hire" (p. 1). Carlsson and Rooth's (2007) study compared résumés with Middle Eastern and Swedish sounding names for Swedish

companies who had real job openings. Their findings revealed that applicants with a Middle Eastern ethnic first name received fewer callbacks from the Swedish companies. These studies show clear evidence of demonstrated discrimination towards ethnic names. Job applicants who had ethnic first names were less likely to be called, recruited, or hired for open positions. Fryer and Levitt (2004) acknowledged that “overall, Black choices of first names today differ substantially more than Whites than do the names chosen by native-born Hispanics and Asians” (p. 770), wherein this supports discrimination towards the holder of that first name.

The recruiters’ conscious or unconscious bias toward ethnic first names may thwart their efforts to recruit people who would otherwise be qualified job candidates. All chapter SHRM organizations and HR professionals are considered to be expert advisors to organizations who wish to conquer human management issues today to make a better tomorrow (SHRM, 2013, June 16). The SHRM organization along with HR professionals boast that they are ethical, diverse, and non-judgmental; however, the treatment of a résumé with an ethnic first name, revealed that these individuals who are members of the organization harbor bias and practice discrimination.

A typical pool of candidates brings candidates from diverse backgrounds that, naturally, have names which reflect their respective ethnic heritages. The hiring managers who were unfamiliar with a particular ethnic first name usually rejected this candidate for a callback; in addition, these managers associated certain characteristics with ethnic backgrounds. Job applicants with ethnic names, therefore, faced discrimination during the application process, and did not have a fair opportunity with this employer, even though they were qualified.

The significance of the study is to further examine how perceived discrimination toward ethnic first names in the areas of a socioeconomic status, familiarity, and likeability influences the potential for a callback or hire. Cotton et al. (2008) explored the relationship between discrimination toward ethnic first names and the callbacks received or being hired. Similar research by Mehrabian (2001) suggested there are reactions to individuals with different names which brings forth attractiveness which also refers to variables of likeability and preference. Yet, a gap in the research in pursuing other types of discrimination associated with an ethnic first name have been presented by Cotton et al. (2008), specifically in the areas of socioeconomic status towards the ethnic name, familiarity of the ethnic name, and the likeability of the ethnic name.

3. Perspectives from Literature

Numerous scholars as Bursell (2007), Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004), and Cotton et al. (2008), have studied the way human resource recruiters or hiring managers select job applicants from a pool of resumes based on the applicant’s first name. Their findings revealed that recruiters possess bias and discrimination towards ethnic first names. The ethnic names were identified in studies as: Russian, Middle Eastern, German, African-American, Swedish, and others. The seminal research does suggest discrimination is evident towards ethnic names when compared to a common or to the particular countries’ ethnicities name. This was demonstrated with Bursell’s study in Sweden.

Bursell’s (2007) study looked at a pool of fictitious job applicants who had either Swedish names or foreign-sounding Arabic/African names. The applicants with Swedish names received more callbacks. Bursell acknowledged the employers who were able to see these names on the applications applied their own perceptions to the foreign names, perceptions which had negative outcomes, such as designating specific negative characteristics to the name and the recruiters’ dislike of the foreign name. Furthermore, Fryer and Levitt (2004) have argued that since the 1980s, Black names have changed from distinctively Black to *ghettoization* Black names which indicate to a recruiter particular type of socioeconomic status. This candidate will probably not receive a callback, hence, a black name led to negative consequences. Cotton et al. (2008) recommends HR professionals stay away from stereotyping of an individual based on the first name and either remove or hide the name from the application. In addition, HR professionals are to adhere to diversity and the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy and they are to initiate in the recruitment processes which training programs are developed and implemented to educate all of the employees, whether or not they are hiring managers. However, Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004, p. 1011) suggest that “training programs alone may not be enough to alleviate the racial gap in labor market outcomes”. Hiring managers must overcome their prejudice and bias. A recommendation from Watson, Appiah, & Thornton (2011) suggests that the employer should offer sensitivity training to all managers to train them to see only the job-relevant qualities of an individual. However, no matter how much training is presented, people will still harbor personal perceptions of first names. Cotton et al. (2008) suggest that removing the first name from a job application is the most advantageous strategy for job applicants.

The study has chosen HR business professionals who have hiring responsibilities as part of their professional duties, wherein Wilson and Parker (2007) directed their study towards managers who had supervisory experience with hiring duties. In addition, their study acknowledged stereotyping occurs within the hiring processes which “the findings indicate that applicants with Anglo-Saxon/European ethnicity have a higher perceived “fit” for the position” (p. 38). Furthermore, Wilson and Parker’s (2007) perspective reveals that a black applicant has less of a chance of receiving a

callback during the preliminary job screening process. Mehrabian's (2001) research included name selection to be rated against four different characteristics which the respondents had perceptions and impressions towards the name per characteristic. The four characteristics were ethical caring, popular fun, successful, and masculine-feminine. Hence, the respondents in his study revealed they think of certain names as unique or attractive. Recruiters usually hire individuals like themselves, which means people who have similar names to the recruiter's own name may have an advantage. In this research, there are 12 names, some are commonly known, unique, and may be perceived to be a particular ethnicity which may lead a recruiter to call them back to be hired or not. However, if the recruiter is unfamiliar and perceives an unlikability of the unique or the ethnic name, they may not call this individual back or hire them. The familiarity and likeability of a first name is determined by the recruiter due to their personal perceptions.

Carlsson and Rooth's study (2007) and this research have chosen and focused on particular names because "the choice of names is crucial since ethnicity is only signaled through the name" (p. 719). This study incorporated into the interview statement a selection of unusual and African-American first names to seek if recruiters recognize these names as ethnic and react favorably or unfavorably toward them.

Hudson and Radu's study (2011) suggest that there are "unfair employer practices" (p. 8), wherein qualitative research is needed to further discuss the motivations of the discrimination towards ethnic names. The ethnographic study is to further acknowledge that recruiting professionals have unfair hiring practices, which they hold biases towards people with ethnic first names, resulting in stereotyping. In addition, James and Otsuka (2009) indicated "recruitment officers in business may prefer more homogeneity in the workforce" (p. 470), which this study also indicates that recruiters who are familiar with and like the candidate's first name are more likely to hire such people, resulting in a more homogenous workplace.

The participants are recruiters who are under the direction of a manager or director within the Human Resources department. These individuals are usually the first ones to review a candidate's résumé and/or job application. The assumption is that the participants have common sense and are knowledgeable about the backgrounds of names, and can determine the ethnicity of a name. The names chosen for the study did seek the socioeconomic background associated with each chosen name, whereas the unusual and African-American names chosen exhibit ethnicity and are easy targets for stereotyping. Kaas and Manger (2010) inferred that "it is also evident for every human resource manager to deduce the ethnic background from these names", in addition, they did not do exclusive research on names "regarding their social background, but we assured that the names do not contradict common sense, are very stereotypical, or exhibit other peculiarities" (p. 7). The research and the interview statement did indicate first names that are unusual and African-American names which could be easily stereotyped and labeled peculiar.

The research conducted by Davis and Muir (2003) suggests that minority students faced difficulties in writing resumes. From their study, the minority students acknowledge that recruiters hold certain perceptions of the students' "name, address, education, work history, extra-curricular activities, and choice of references" (p. 39). One underlying theory presented from Davis and Muir's study is that the participants agree recruiters do have perceptions towards applications which it was conceded a minority applicant had changed their information to reduce any detection of their ethnicity. This theory implies minorities are trying to conceal their ethnicity to help themselves where a recruiter will be more familiar and amiable towards the candidate's first name on the résumé. Davis and Muir (2003) noted "to reduce the chances of detection and being eliminated prematurely, some minority students Anglicize their names" (p. 39). A general implication to the existing research from this theory is that recruiters have a wide range of biases towards a résumé which the research focuses only on the first name, looking, in particular, if the recruiter is familiar with the name, if they like the name, and if they place the name into a socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic status can be perceived by the applicant's address of residence, which indicates if one lives in a low, middle, or high-income neighborhood, or by the perception of the first name to be placed into a specific socioeconomic level.

A second underlying theory presented by Devine (1989) indicates an "approach of *inevitability of prejudice*" perspective states as long as stereotypes exist, prejudice will follow, where this approach suggests stereotypes are automatically applied to members of the stereotyped group" (p. 5). Therefore, if a recruiter has stereotyped an unusual or ethnic first name wherein they place this name into a particular socioeconomic status, the prejudice towards the socioeconomic status is negative because the recruiters do not belong to it, even if the status is considered to be higher than their name. The research enables the participants who are recruiters to assign the first names into a particular socioeconomic status level that may lead to prejudice towards those names in the other levels. In Rooth's (2007) study, conducted in Sweden, he analyzed a "correlation in a real hiring situation to analyze whether stereotypes of the recruiter/employer is correlated with that him/her having discriminated against ethnic minority applicants when inviting job candidates for an interview" (p. 2). The underlying theory from his study is that even in a control environment he was able to have recruiters compare three statements to Swedish and Arab/Muslin names wherein the Arab/Muslin names were highly discriminated against by the recruiters. The implications demonstrate ones' attitude towards a name infers stereotyping

that portrays the ethnicity can be judged in a negative light. Furthermore, in Rooth's study, the ethnic Arab/Muslim name shows this group of individuals had low productivity associated with their name, hence, they were not called back or hired. In Rooth's study, the mind-set of the recruiter is revealed when they chose a designated socioeconomic status for unusual and ethnic names which a low status has results of lower productivity.

There are four particular seminal authors' studies that originated the theories that demonstrated the concepts of discrimination towards a first name in the hiring processes. Beginning with Busse and Seraydarian (1978), they noted unique names appear to have a connotation in being undesirable; however, the more frequent a name is used the higher the desirability ratings. Their study had "179 boys names and 246 girls names" (p. 144) which the girls names possessed a larger selection of female names, hence, when the participants continually saw certain names frequently, these names were more desired than the infrequent unique names. Therefore, the infrequency of seeing unusual and unique names on a résumé appears to have negative connotations from a recruiter that implies bias towards the individual, therefore they are not called back or hired for employment due to the recruiter's perceptions of the name. In 1980, Garwood, Cox, Kaplan, Wasserman, and Sulzer's study had the participants make a decision towards the physical appearance of a beauty queen photo. The researchers attached a first name to the photo to see if the respondents judged the beauty queen's name as attractive. The researchers placed the more desirable names with the more attractive photos and the less desirable names with the less attractive photos. The research was to demonstrate if the correlation of physical attractiveness and a person's first name "affects a person-perception process" (Garwood et al., 1980, p. 432). Their study shows that an individual whose name is not perceived as desirable then the person's physical attractiveness was not desirable. Hence, this study sought to examine the categorization of a person's first name into a specific socioeconomic status, a status lower than the recruiters'. Consequently, like the photo of the beauty queen, the job candidate is not attractive enough to be part of the company if their socioeconomic status is perceived to be lower than the recruiters'.

The research conducted by Mehrabian (2001) established that various factors affect the perceptions from the individuals towards unusual and unique names; furthermore, these perceptions come into play prior to interacting with a person. A recruiter reads the name from the résumé and, usually, there has been no prior interaction with the applicant. In addition, Mehrabian (2001) conducted "seven studies dealing with characteristics that are attributed to individuals on the bases of their names" (p. 82), whereas one objective was to provide "a set of factors to describe attractive and unattractive characteristics connoted by first names" (p. 85). These two characteristics lead to perceptions of an individual which could jeopardize an opportunity for employment.

Darity and Mason (1998) suggested in their research that in the "south" black individuals had been discriminated against in the hiring processes before any laws were created and after the laws were created to end discrimination within the full employment cycle of an individual along with the expanding fairness in the workplace. Their study suggests there is economic disparity and discrimination towards blacks which in turn reflects the applicant's economic status wherein they were considered to be in a lower status. The perception of an applicant's socioeconomic status which is perceived to be lower than the recruiter's or hiring manager's and they are not called back creates bias and discrimination towards this person. Since the 1970s, African-American parents have continued to name their children with African-American sounding names, as suggested by Fryer and Levitt (2004). In Fryer and Levitt's study along with the data collected they indicated that the names appear to be peculiar African-American. In their study they presented the names such as "DeShawn, Tyrone, Reginald, Shanice, Precious, Kiara, and Deja are quite popular among Blacks, but virtually unheard for Whites" (2004, p. 770), which implies as African-American first names. Their study also revealed if the name sounds like an African-American name it identifies their race as well portraying a lower level of socioeconomic status, therefore, "a distinctly Black name is now a much stronger predictor of socioeconomic status" (Fryer & Levitt, 2004, p. 801). Hence, this research asked if the perceptions from a recruiter are identifying first names, are the recruiter's also placing these names into a lower socioeconomic status? The first author who is most closely aligned with the research is Cotton et al. (2008), their study "examined how the uniqueness and ethnicity of first names influence affective reactions to those names and their potential for hire" (p. 1). The study is aligned with Cotton et al's (2004) where it had examined the unfamiliarity and familiar, unlikableness and likeableness of a first name and the placement of the first names into specified socioeconomic status levels. The perceptions created reactions to those names, which the outcome maybe a potential for a callback or hire. Cotton et al's (2004) study indicated the novelty of a name is also part of the discrimination against uncommon and ethnic names, which their study as well as this study has placed this statement "This name seems novel" within the instrument. Hence, one of the instruments utilized in Cotton et al's research has been adapted for this research where the study created new statements and changed the names in the unusual and African-American categories. Furthermore, Cotton et al. (2004) suggested "Human Resource professionals need to be aware that there seems to be a clear bias in how people perceive names. When résumés are screened for hiring, names should be left off" (p. 1).

Another study that is closely aligned to the study is by Bursell (2007). In Bursell's (2007) research he asked "can employer discrimination explain differences in employment rates between natives and immigrants" (p. 3), wherein immigrant names are being discriminated against for open positions in Sweden. He conducted a correspondence test to determine discrimination with the lack of callbacks to the immigrants whose name signified they are not a native of Sweden. He utilized fictitious job applications "by assigning each pair of job applications one Swedish sounding name and one foreign sounding name which in this experiment means either an Arabic sounding name or a (non Muslim) name from the Horn of Africa region" (p. 10). The study has also chosen names for the unusual and African-American categories where there are two male and two female first names per category. In addition, the study examined if these names are unfamiliar and unlikable where the callback for the name will not occur. Furthermore, one statement seeks to have the names be identified in a level of a socioeconomic status. The socioeconomic status level could be perceived as one who is in a lower income status and not as productive. Bursell (2007) indicates a foreign name demonstrates lower productivity, therefore, "if the employers take a Swedish sounding name as a proxy for higher productivity, they may screen out all applications with a foreign name not reading more than the name on top of the application sheet" (p. 21).

The researchers Bertrand and Mullainathan (2004) conducted their research in Chicago, Illinois, and they also did their study with fictitious résumés with either African-American or White sounding names. The employers discriminated against the African-American sounding names while the White sounding names received 50% more callbacks. The African-American sounding names utilized were Lakisha or Jamal and the White sounding names were Emily or Greg. The study has 12 names with three categories of common, unusual, and African-American. Each of the categories has names that represent the category. Each of the studies presented acknowledged that the first name of the applicant is crucial in determining if the applicant receives a callback or hire from the employer, no matter if a résumé or survey had been distributed. The first process in selecting a candidate is to review their résumé or application and depending on the recruiter's perception of the first name, this can determine a callback or an interview with the candidate.

4. Research Methods

The empirical data for this study was collected by an ethnographic field-work methodology that "stands or falls on building mutually supportive relations with a few key people" (Bernard, 2011, p. 152). This is an advantage to the research due to "the search for formal and systematic ways to select focused ethnographic informants—people who can help you learn about particular areas of culture—has been going on for a long time [sic]" (Bernard, 2011, p. 153). This methodology relied on key informants who are individuals the researcher could easily speak with, understand what is needed from them, and joyfully give the pertinent information pertaining to selecting individuals during the recruitment process (Bernard, 2011). Paterson (2011) acknowledged Geertz's key concept of *local knowledge*, in "arguing that ethnographic reality does not exist apart from anthropologists' written versions of it, he said that cultures and peoples should speak for themselves, with anthropologists learning to *converse with them* and interpret them" (para 3). The ethnographic field-work was the way to converse with the participants and interpret the collected information he or she presented. This methodology provided insight to the practice of the recruitment process and to HR professionals who are in the position in reviewing job applications and résumés.

4.1 Data

We used data from 20 semi-structured interviews with recruiters who were members of a local SHRM chapter as well as a member with the national association of SHRM. The information was collaborated from multiple diverse participant observation data within a 3 month period. Observations and discussions provided large volumes of transcripts and the semi-structured interviews provided valuable data that was coded and transcribed. The data collected was determined by the interview statement provided to the 20 recruiters whom attended a meeting at a local chapter of SHRM in a southeast state. To assist with the semi-structured interviews, a qualified facilitator (B. Euler) was appointed to ensure all discussions were transcribed by the researcher. The research questions narrowed the focus of the first names that revealed bias and discrimination and demonstrated recruiters place socioeconomic status to their name and to others. The researcher was able answer two research questions whereas the theme of discrimination was proposed by the data.

4.2 Semi-structured Interviews

The interviews took place after a local SHRM chapter meeting adjourned which was held at one of the local SHRM member's place of work. Each of the 20 recruiters had a semi-formal interview, which the facilitator led with discussion while the recruiters reviewed and answered the interview statement during the discussion. The researcher observed and took notes with each participant of their behavior, facial expressions, and dialogue that was exchanged with the facilitator. The composition of the recruiters who were males constituted of three White and one Black, and the composition of the recruiters who were females constituted of one Hispanic and 15 Whites. Most of the participants in the discussion/semi-structured interview were white. "There is growing evidence that 10-20 knowledgeable people are enough to uncover and understand the core categories in any well-defined cultural or study of lived experience"

(Bernard, 2011, p. 154).

4.3 Participation Observation

Observations were formed throughout a 3 month period when the researcher had business clients to mentor and advise the recruiter at his or her workplace, one-on-one conversations with recruiter's throughout workshops or seminars, and during the distribution and collection of the instrument. The majority of observations and conversations were made while the researcher was a participant in a workplace and at workshops. The amount of time differed per situation; due to free-time was allocated throughout a workshop and or seminar, as well as the amount of time the researcher spent at the client's place of business. The observation during the distribution, administering and collection of the instrument enabled discussion to occur with a group versus individually.

4.4 Analysis

The note taking and data collected from the instruments developed a theme where the data was coded to developed patterns relevant to the recruitment process of the recruiters. Overall, 14 codes were created to identify perceived unlikableness, likeability, unfamiliar, familiar, Caucasian, Ethnic Minority, African-American, intent not to hire/to hire, and the level of a socioeconomic status , which are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Codes and Descriptions*

Codes	Descriptions
PU	Perceived Uniqueness
PUFUL	Perceived Unfamiliar Unlikable
PUFL	Perceived Unfamiliar Likeness
PFL	Perceived Familiar Likeness
PL	Perceived Likeness
PFUL	Perceived Familiar Unlikable
PC	Perceived Caucasian
PAA	Perceived African American
PEM	Perceived Ethnic Minority
INH	Intent Not to Hire
IH	Intent to Hire
PSSL	Perceived Socioeconomic Status Low
PSSM	Perceived Socioeconomic Status Middle
PSSH	Perceived Socioeconomic Status High

4.5 Places of Investigation

The researcher has a consulting business where clients from both profit and non-profit establishments have had human resource issues where advising had taken place within the HR department, more than often with the recruiter. In observing and conversing with him or her, the researcher would examine the practices of the establishment in the recruitment processes. One of the practices within the recruitment process by the recruiter is the review of the résumés and applications for an open position, the recruiter created electronic and hard copy folders and labeled them as qualified, somewhat qualified, and not qualified according to the open position. The résumés and applications would be quickly reviewed, whereas some of the recruiters would make comments such as if a name was *pretty, never heard of, hard to pronounce, and or it is common/uncommon name*. In addition, the recruiter would indicate the location of the applicant's residence which would either give a positive or negative reaction towards the applicant. In each city, there are neighborhoods that are known of low income, high crime, and or run down. Those applicants who had an address within those perceived types of neighborhoods, a comment by the recruiter was made in a derogatory way, suggesting the applicant would have no chance of receiving a callback for an interview.

During workshops or seminars for HR professionals that included recruiters as attendees, observations and conversations occurred between the researcher and the recruiter(s) where journaling took place in gaining insight of the recruitment processes at his or her company. The consensus between the recruiters was that when he or she began reviewing a résumé and or an application, where the first thing on the application was the applicant's name, which it is the first thing the recruiter read, which led the recruiter to make the first impression. The recruiters explained the recruitment processes within their company which appears to be uniformed across all industries. The recruiter retrieves the résumé/application, scans it quickly, perceives whether the applicant is qualified or not, and directs the résumés that are qualified to the hiring manager. However, the recruiters acknowledged that he or she have had biases in reviewing a

r ésum éthat was towards a name, address, city/town, education, format, spelling, grammar, and places of employment.

A facilitator (B. Euler) was appointed to conduct this distribution of the instrument after a local SHRM meeting had ended which 20 recruiters participated to complete the background and interview statements. The facilitator assisted in starting a conversation with the participants while the researcher was an observer and participant. The facilitator began leading the conversation informing them of a former recruiter at her current employer was hiring individuals whose name began with the letter A. This story ignited the conversation of other perceptions this group of recruiters had of names. In observation of the participants of where he or she chose to sit, approximately four White females spread out that were away from the group at two other tables. The researcher scrutinized the four White females facial expressions and body language of crossed arms resembling the expression of not letting anyone in. One comment made by a White male suggested “Is this questionnaire about the name game in recruiting”? The facilitator expressed to all to answer honestly the two questionnaires where 100% anonymity of each participant’s responses were assured.

4.6 Description of the participants

The respondents who were recruited for the study had to possess three criteria: 1) be a current member of SHRM; 2) be a current member of the chosen Florida local SHRM chapter; and 3) a recruiter, or someone who has current responsibilities as a hiring manager. The local chapter that was selected was in the state of Florida and had to have current memberships of over 200 members to effectively recruit 20 participants. Creswell (2007) suggests a researcher should recruit 20-30 people for the theory to be well saturated. Each of the 20 participants had to meet all the criteria to participate in the study. At the scheduled monthly meeting there were a total of 62 attendees with a diversity of ethnicities represented. The composition of the attendees who were males constituted nine white and one black, and the composition of the attendees who were females constituted three black, one Asian, one Hispanic, and 47 whites. Most of the participants in the study were white. The composition of the participants is indicated as white females (WF) dominated the group of participants, and there were far fewer white males (WM). A Black male (BM) and Hispanic female (HF), were represented equally.

5. Results

The results demonstrate the ongoing human resource management issue within HR departments where recruiters have certain personal perceptions towards a name on the r ésum é. The data collected reveals this issue is continuing in particular aspects within a group of participants who are to be known to have an understanding of diversity and inclusion. Recruiters and the SHRM national association need to engage in this change to ensure organizations are aware of this type of bias and discrimination is occurring and to address this issue with each hiring personnel.

The study determined that the participants were discriminating against unusual or ethnic names. This determination could lead to positive changes for organizations as well as for recruiters who are members in the SHRM national association and all local chapters to omit the name of the candidate from the application and r ésum é. Furthermore, the SHRM national association could lead the way implementing new processes in recruitment and selection as well as develop new training programs for diversity and inclusion. The research questions are as follows:

R1: How does the perception of an ethnic first name indicate negative stereotyping for callbacks/hiring?

R2: How would the SHRM member’s first name impact the perception of an applicant’s name?

5.1 The Interview Statement Results

Each interview statement was given a number to be identified for coding that was in sequence of the order per statement. For instance, the first statement was considered to be statement number 1, and so forth. The twelve statements were tallied by using the answers of agree (A) or disagree (D) which was noted per statement per first name. In addition, the interview statement also had the statement seeking the perception from the recruiter of the socioeconomic status level per name which the participant assigned an L, M, or H to represent low, middle, or high retrospectively (see Appendix A). When this procedure was completed, the creation of the codes from the interview statement was allocated per statement to indicate categories to validate the concept of a theory; this procedure is also known as open coding. However, the researcher did adapt a few of the codes from Cotton et al’s (2008) study to ensure the categories were being represented appropriately, thus one category was combined due to the nature of the statement.

The categories from the interview statement were identified as common male and female, unusual male and female, and African-American male and female along with the first names per category. The statements from the first interview statement were designated with a number to represent each one. The first statement would be considered to be statement

number 1, hence, the remaining statements followed in sequence. In addition the response associated to the statement is also indicated, placing an A or D next to the number representing the statement. In Tables 2 and 3, it displays the male and female first names per category with responses, retrospectively.

Table 2. *Results of Categories of Common, Unusual, and African-American Male First Names*

Categories and Names Responses	CM-Robert	CM-John	UM-Santino	UM-Atholl	AAM-Orpheus	AAM-Tyrone
Codes & Statement Number						
PU 1A/5D	9	9	29	27	23	17
PUFL 2A	0	10	8	10	9	2
PUFUL 3A	0	10	1	10	10	3
PFL 4A	18	19	11	1	8	15
PL 6D	7	6	9	16	17	8
PFUL 7A	1	1	4	5	3	5
PC 8D	4	4	20	18	16	18
PAA 9A	2	2	1	5	11	16
PEM 10A	1	1	14	14	14	14
INH 11D	20	20	19	19	19	19
IH 12A	20	20	19	19	19	19
PSL 13	1	1	3	7	7	8
PSM 13	8	8	13	8	10	9
PSH 13	9	9	2	3	1	1

Note: Number represents the amount of recruiters who had responded to the statement for male names.

Table 3. *Results of Categories of Common, Unusual, and African-American Female First Names*

Categories & Names Responses	CF-Susan	CF-Mary	UF-Kalene	UF-Rayna	AAF-Shawndriell	AAF-Akiriya
Codes & Statement Number						
PU 1A/5D	8	10	19	20	23	27
PUFL 2A	0	10	11	10	8	9
PUFUL 3A	0	19	2	4	12	12
PFL 4A	17	17	7	8	3	3
PL 6D	6	8	11	11	17	14
PFUL 7A	1	4	3	2	2	1
PC 8D	3	4	15	14	20	19
PAA 9A	2	3	5	8	18	17
PEM 10A	0	1	4	7	19	18
INH 11D	19	20	19	19	19	18
IH 12A	20	20	19	19	19	18
PSL 13	1	1	5	5	12	10
PSM 13	12	12	12	11	5	7
PSH 13	4	5	1	2	1	1

Note: Number represents the amount of recruiters who had responded to the statement for female names.

A main category was created which became the main phenomenon from open coding the data that produced information was the Perceived Ethnic Minority (PEM) code for the interview statement. The category of PEM revealed the core phenomenon of how one's first name was perceived to be an ethnic minority first name (see Table 4). The perception of one's first name to be within an ethnic minority establishes that individuals do create ethnic minority associations with

first names.

Table 4. *Phenomenon of Perceived Ethnic Minority (PEM)*

Category	FN	PEM-10A
CM	Robert	1
	John	1
CF	Susan	0
	Mary	1
UM	Santino	14
	Atholl	14
UF	Kalene	5
	Rayna	7
AAM	Orpheus	14
	Tyrone	14
AAF	Shawndriell	19
	Akiriya	18

Note. CM = Common Male; CF = Common Female; UM = Unusual Male; UF = Unusual Female; AAM = African-American Male; AAF = African-American Female; FN = First Name; PEM = Perceived Ethnic Minority.

5.2 Presentation of the Results for the Interview Statement

Overall, the main phenomenon and each of the categories had significance in answering R1: How does the perception of an ethnic first name indicate negative stereotyping for callbacks/hiring?

The PEM statement is the cornerstone for developing the theory wherein the perceptions of an ethnic minority's first name has indicated negative stereotyping. Each of the categories created proved that recruiters have perceptions of which first names are considered ethnic minorities and each of the categories contributes to this perception. The Perceived Uniqueness category indicates the UM, UF, AAM, and AAF first name categories confirm these groups have negative stereotyping since the participants perceived the categories of UM, AAM, and AAF as Perceived Ethnic Minority first names. In addition, the category of UF in the Perceived Uniqueness category had the 4th highest results wherein this category also had perceptions of negative stereotyping from recruiters.

The category of PUFUL signifies the perceptions of an unfamiliar and unlikable first name, and the UM category, the name Atholl and in the AAM category the name Orpheus, as well as both first names in the AAF category Shawndriell and Akiriya all represent negative stereotyping since the PEM included these three categories. However, undetermined reasoning of why Mary and Susan in the CF category and John in the CM category under the PUFUL have high results, when they are perceived to be indicated as being perceived likeable (PL) as well.

The category of PSSL implies the first name Tyrone within the AAM category and both names in the AAF category gave leeway to both of the research questions. The PSSL combined with the PEM category implies negative stereotyping occurred and the recruiters have perceptions of a candidate's first name but also their first name (see Table 5). According to Fryer and Levitt (2004), "even if the employer knows the candidate is black, the blackness of the name continues to serve as an important signal of socioeconomic status" (pp. 800-801). Fryer and Levitt suggests the blackness of a name derives when one is born into a black neighborhood.

Table 5. *Results of Main Phenomenon and Categories of First Names*

Main Category	CM	CF	UM	UF	AAM	AAF
PEM			X		X	X
Sub-categories	CM	CF	UM	UF	AAM	AAF
PU			X	X	X	X
PUFUL	X	X	X	X	X	X
		(John)		(Atholl)		(Orpheus)
PSSL					X	X
						(Tyrone)
PAA					X	X

Note. X = Both names in category are present in the category; X (First Name) = Only this name is present in the category.

The category of PAA correlates with the first names in AAM and AAF within the PEM, also in the PEM the category of UM is present. However, PAA also included Rayna from the UF category. The perceptions from the recruiters demonstrate they associate PEM and PAA categories where the first names are identifiable of a particular ethnic background, especially when the participants established the AAM and AAF categories which are perceived as African-American first names.

In concluding the presentation of the results, R1 has been satisfactorily answered by the theory that perceptions of ethnic minority and unusual first names along with the perceptions of the uniqueness and unfamiliar and unlikely aspects of a name indicated negative stereotyping. However, the ethnic first names also included the perceptions of the socioeconomic status of an ethnic first name, and the results were in the low socioeconomic status for AAM and AAF categories, in addition if the first name was perceived as African-American.

Each of the categories chosen established saturation of the raw data to develop the theory that answers the first research question that confirms the perception of an ethnic minority and unusual first name that is unique, unfamiliar, and unlikely is also associated in the low socioeconomic status. These factors indicate negative stereotyping which are the perceptions from professional HR recruiters.

Even though the recruiters who are members of a national and local HR association displayed it is common to have perceptions, if the perceptions of a first name that is perceived to be an ethnic minority or unusual the negative stereotyping indicates changes within the recruiting processes is a priority. The group of participants represented a majority of white recruiters where the possibility of the race-interviewer effect occurred as presented by Schuman and Converse, in which the unusual and African-American first names were not perceived to be white names. The data presented had been exhausted wherein constant comparison occurred with the main phenomenon of PEM had been supported by PU, PUFUL, PSSL, and PAA categories demonstrating recruiters had negative stereotyping towards ethnic and unusual first names.

5.3 Presentation of the Results of the Background Interview Statement

By and large, the main phenomenon and each of the categories did have significance in answering R2: How would the SHRM member's first name impact the perception of an applicant's name?

The main phenomenon of PRFN is the foundation in developing a theory that the recruiter's first name does impact the perception of an applicant's first name, and the categories of PRFNSSM, PRFNHSSM, PRFNLSSH, and PBRRY have significantly supported this theory. Beginning with the main phenomenon of PRFN this constitutes this group of recruiters did perceive their first name to be in the middle socioeconomic status level, which implied those candidates who are not perceived to be in the same socioeconomic status level as the recruiters may not be called back or hired. This is confirmed by the category of PRFNSSM, in which the majority of participants inferred they were in the middle socioeconomic status level.

The area within the state of Florida, where the data collection took place, was in a city that is considered to have well educated and skilled individuals who are in the middle to high socioeconomic status levels, as well as the diverse industries in this area to support this income bracket for recruiters. Therefore, to support PRFN, the PRFNSSM did imply the recruiter's first name impacts the perception of the applicant's first name, which, if their first name is not perceived to be within the recruiter's first name socioeconomic status level, the applicant will not be called back or hired.

In observation and noting the clothing and fashions of the individuals who participated in the study an assumption could be generalized wherein each of the participants were clothed in business attire. First impressions of how one is dressed can also indicate one's socioeconomic status. For example, the participant's attire indicated their income level would reflect a middle socioeconomic status.

The category of PRFNHSSM advocated the main phenomenon of PRFN wherein eight of the twenty participants answered they have perceived their first name in a higher socioeconomic status than the first name on the résumé which in comparison to the résumé's first name, they rated theirs to be in the middle socioeconomic status level. Even though they did respond they had perceived their first name to be in a specific socioeconomic status level. The participants who did answer did indicate yes their first name had been perceived in a higher socioeconomic status level than the applicants, in which theirs were in the middle socioeconomic status level in this comparison, leading to a generalization that the applicant's first name was in the low socioeconomic status level since the eight participants all chose the middle socioeconomic status. This perception from the participants demonstrates within this study that for every five participants, two perceived their first name to be in the middle socioeconomic status level due to the other three stated they did not perceive their first name to an applicant. However, all of the participants did respond to question 10 in indicating their first name as they perceived it to be, the majority were in the middle-income socioeconomic status level. Hence, the participants who responded with a no for question 11 may have felt if they answered this question they would be considered to be bias or discriminating towards applicants.

The category of PRFNLSSH significantly supports the PRFN wherein this category also indicates the recruiter's first name does impact the perception of an applicant's first name. However, the participants have responded that they have perceived their first name in a lower socioeconomic status level than the applicant's and their response the applicant's

first name was in the high socioeconomic status level. Their response also demonstrates if an applicant's first name is perceived to be in a higher socioeconomic status level than the recruiter's this may have the recruiter in a disadvantage in calling them back or hiring them since the higher socioeconomic status level alludes they too are not in the same socioeconomic status level as the recruiter. This category also gives weight in answering the research question that the recruiter's first name impacts the perception of an applicant's name, even if it is in a higher level.

Last, in question 7, the category of PBRRY was developed wherein this infers the majority of the participants, sixteen out of twenty, responded yes they perceived there are biases in recruiting from a recruiter towards an applicant's résumé. This category solidifies to answer the second research question and supports the main phenomenon of PRFN.

The participants also had the capability to write in the biases they perceived in question 8, which was noted education, names, and nationality and ethnicity were the top three biases, retrospectively, from those who wrote a response. Therefore, the recruiters exposed that they did perceive there are biases in recruiting towards an applicant's first names as well as what type of biases that were perceived from the recruiters.

The age groupings demonstrated the majority of females were the ages of 46-55 years old, as well as the majority of the males. The generalization and assumptions led to this age grouping may not have had diversity recruitment experiences wherein they are unfamiliar and dislike unique ethnic and unusual first names. In Table 3 the years of experience for the majority of the females were in the range of 6-10 years and for the males the two years of experience groupings were evenly split between 6-10 and 0-5 years. An assumption for years of experience in the recruitment processes leads to a lack of experience in diversity in selecting candidates. Therefore, this could be an indicator that the age of the recruiter and the years of experience both contribute to lack of knowledge of diversity wherein his or her perceptions created negative stereotyping.

6. Summary

In summary, both research questions have been justified wherein the first research question indicated that the theory of when a recruiter perceives a first name to be an ethnic minority, unique, unfamiliar, and unlikable, within a low socioeconomic status, and African-American, these lead to negative stereotypes. The categories supported the main phenomenon of PEM, wherein the UM, AAM, and AAF were included in the PEM and the three categories. Therefore, the first research question has been analyzed and explained how a perception of an ethnic first name indicates negative stereotyping for callbacks and hiring.

The second research question indicated a contribution to the theory of would the recruiter's first name impact the perception of an applicant's first name wherein the recruiters who were the participants first perceived their first name to be in the middle socioeconomic status level, which is the main phenomenon which alludes to the first category of PRFNSSM. Furthermore, the recruiter's first name impacts both categories of PRFNHHL and PRFNLSSH which confers the recruiter's first name was perceived in the middle socioeconomic status level, therefore, the applicant's first names who were perceived to be in the levels of either low or high has an impact on the recruiter's perception. This is confirmed by the last category of PBRR, which these participants data revealed there are biases in recruiting from a recruiter. Therefore, theory has been presented that the recruiter's first name impacts their perception towards an applicant's first name in the ways of perceiving their name within a specified socioeconomic status, the recruiter's compared their first name in a higher and lower socioeconomic status towards applicants, and they perceive there are biases in recruiting from recruiters in the forms of one's education, name, and nationality and ethnicity.

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 Discussion of the interview statement results

The development of the first research question along with the instrument was created to collect the raw data that was necessary to have the concepts be examined and the research question answered (see Appendix A). The perception of an ethnic first name was the main phenomenon from the instrument wherein three categories supported the phenomenon wherein negative stereotyping had occurred from recruiters who are members of the national association of SHRM and a member of a local SHRM chapter in the state of Florida. The results did answer R1, in addition, solidified the gap presented by Cotton et al. which they indicated that the uniqueness, unfamiliarity, and unlikable of a first name are factors to have biases towards ethnic and unusual names. The participants perceived three out of the six categories of first names had high results as an ethnic minority first name. The three categories that supported the main phenomenon; PU, PUFUL, and PAA all had these three first name categories solidifying the perceptions of a unique first name, unfamiliar and unlikable, and African-American, demonstrated negative stereotyping. These results are in correlation to the research question wherein the explanations are the supported categories to the main phenomenon. Therefore, the recruiters have negative stereotyping due to their perceptions and they therefore do not callback or hire a candidate. The majority of participants who were recruiters were 15 white females and three white males out of the 20 participants may

have had an influence of the outcomes with the results. However, being associated with the SHRM organization, the recruiters are to be the example to one another and to those who are not members of this organization wherein they are the advocates in various types of human resource management issues. The perceptions from the participants enables for proactive change in the recruiting processes wherein the name of an applicant should be removed from the résumé and the application. In addition, it had been acknowledged in Cotton et al's study by referencing "it becomes incumbent upon HR professionals to discourage the use of stereotypes among anyone who participates in hiring" (2008, p. 16). Furthermore, in their review there are references to initiate diversity training. However, diversity and inclusion training may not be enough, change must be developed with each individual and be respectful to other ethnic backgrounds that are not like one's own.

6.2 Discussion of the background statement results

The development of the second research question along with the background interview statement was created to collect raw data that was necessary to answer the second research question. The background interview statement had open-ended questions which question 10 (see Appendix B) was the basis for the main phenomenon that indicated the participants perceived their first name to be in the middle socioeconomic status level that represented an income level range of \$21K-\$75K. This acknowledges the second research question with the supporting categories that the recruiter's first name had an impact towards an applicant's first name. Those who did answer the question disclosed their first name was in this income bracket. The three categories of PRFNHSSL, PRFNHSSH, and PBRR all supported the main phenomenon of PRFN wherein this reveals those applicants who have a lower or higher income bracket are not similar to that of the recruiter. Furthermore, 16 out 20 participants revealed they did perceive there are biases in recruiting from a recruiter towards an applicant's résumé which is evidence in answering the second research question. The perception the recruiter's had towards their first name impacts the applicant's first name in the ways of perceiving their name to be in a middle socioeconomic status. When the résumés first names were in either the low or high socioeconomic status this indicated the applicant is not the same as the recruiter, therefore, the perception is that this applicant is not similar to the recruiter.

The members of the chosen local SHRM chapter represented diverse industries and companies in a city with a middle socioeconomic status demographic. Therefore, if an applicant with a low or high socioeconomic status applied, the impact from the recruiter acknowledges the first name on the résumé to be perceived to be comparable to their own first name. Even though each of the socioeconomic status levels is represented within this local SHRM chapter, the majority of the sample revealed they were in the middle level.

7. Conclusion

The two research questions were answered by recruiting twenty participants in answering the interview statement and the background interview statement.

Beginning with R1, the recruiters indicated they perceived the first names in the UM, AAM, and AAF categories as belonging to an ethnic minority. Furthermore, their perceptions also inferred these first names were unique, unfamiliar, unlikable, African-American, and eluded these first names to a low socioeconomic status. The data collected from the interview statement was the driving force in answering the first research question.

The second research question R2: was answered by establishing that the recruiters perceived their first name to be within the middle socioeconomic status. This had an impact towards first names on résumés they have reviewed wherein they had perceived applicants' first names in both low and high socioeconomic statuses. In addition, the recruiters overwhelmingly stated there are biases in recruiting from a recruiter towards an applicant's résumé.

The technology that is being provided for applicant tracking may devise a system to include the elimination of the applicant's name. In addition, the diversity and inclusion programs that are being developed by SHRM, professional trainers, and organizations have the capability to incorporate new venues to their programs. The bias and negative stereotyping towards applicants can be a detriment to the organization, the profession of HR, and growth within one, whereas one needs to fully understand and respect the differences of individuals.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW STATEMENT FOR THE STUDY

Directions: Read each statement per first name and answer with an **A for Agree** or **D for Disagree** and go with your first response per name, do not change your answer. *The last questionnaire statement is represented by a letter which is represented as follows: ***L=Low (\$0-\$25K); M=Middle (\$26K- \$75K); H=High (\$76+)**, please use only one of the letters represented for this questionnaire item per name.

Questionnaire Statements	Common Male		Common Female		Unusual Male		Unusual Female		African-American Male		African-American Female	
	Robert	John	Susan	Mary	Santino	Atholl	Kalene	Rayna	Orpheus	Tyrone	Shawndriell	Akiriya
This name seems novel												
I am not familiar with this name and do like it												
I am not familiar with this name and I don't like it												
I am familiar with this name & I like it												
This name doesn't seem unique												
I would highly recommend this name												
I am familiar with this name & I don't like it												
Would expect a Person with this name as Caucasian												
Would expect a person with this name as African-American												
Would expect this person's name to be from an ethnic minority group												
I would not callback or hire someone with this name												
I would callback/hire someone with this name												
This name is perceived in this particular socio-economic status as: *(L, M, or H)												

APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INTERVIEW STATEMENT FOR THE STUDY**Background of Participant**

1. Are you a SHRM member? Yes _____ No _____
2. Are you a member of this local SHRM chapter? Yes _____ No _____
3. Is recruitment one of your responsibilities within the HR department? Y ___ N ___
4. How many years of experience do you possess with recruiting responsibilities or as a recruiter?
0-5 years _____ 6-10 years _____ 11-15 years _____ 16-20 years _____
21-25 years _____ 26+ years _____
5. Which one describes your gender? Male _____ Female _____
6. Your age grouping is in the range of: 18-25 _____ 26-35 _____ 36-45 _____
46-55 _____ 56-65 _____ 66+ _____
7. Do you perceive there are biases in recruiting from a recruiter towards an applicant's résumé? Y ___ N _____
8. If you answered yes to #7, list these types of biases. _____

9. Could any of the listed biases above lead to rejecting a candidate for a callback or hiring decision? Yes _____ No _____ Possibility _____
10. How do you perceive **your first name** within the socioeconomic status ranges from the 1st Interview Statement?
Low (\$0-\$20K); **Middle** (\$21K- \$75K); **High** (\$76+).
Low _____ Middle _____ High _____
11. In scanning a résumé, have you ever perceived your first name in a higher socioeconomic status than the first name on the résumé? Y ___ N _____
If yes, which socioeconomic status represents **your first name** in this comparison?
Low _____ **Middle** _____ **High** _____
12. In scanning a résumé, have you ever perceived **your first name** in a lower socioeconomic status than the first name on the résumé? Y ___ N _____
Which socioeconomic status represents **their first name** in this comparison?
Low _____ **Middle** _____ **High** _____
13. Do you physically scan the qualified candidate's résumé for an open position?
Yes _____ No _____ How much time is spent in scanning? _____
14. As a recruiter, please list the flow process after a résumé is received.

15. Which source(s) determines that the résumé is to receive a phone call/interview?
Electronic database _____ You _____ Other (Describe) _____



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