

# A STRATEGY FOR DIVERSITY TRAINING: FOCUSING ON EMPATHY IN THE WORKPLACE

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*The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of a diversity training exercise using perspective taking to increase positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals. Ninety-six participants were given a pretest (survey) followed by the training and a posttest. Participants were randomly assigned as a “manager” or an “employee.” The managers were provided with a recipe and instructions in English, and the managers’ employees provided with the recipe and instruction in an abstract, non-English language. The results of a repeated-measures ANOVA showed a significant effect of perspective-taking training on attitudes toward non-English speakers, such that attitudes were more positive post-training than pretraining. The effect of the training on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals was moderated by the status role (i.e., manager or employee). In addition, participants’ empathy mediated the relationship between the perspective-taking training and attitudes, such that perspective taking induced empathy, resulting in more positive attitudes.*

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**KEYWORDS:** *diversity; experiments; non-English speakers; training*

Immigrants are a substantial and growing segment of the U.S. labor force. In 2008, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009a) reported that 24.1 million workers (15.6%) in the U.S labor force were foreign-born. The foreign-born designation consists of legally admitted immigrants, refugees, and temporary residents such as students and undocumented immigrants. In addition, 25 million (81%) foreign-born people residing in the United States indicated that they spoke a language other than English at home. Approximately 9 million indicated that they did not speak English very well or at all (Shin & Bruno, 2003). Despite the language barrier, millions of non-English-speaking immigrants are entering the U.S. labor force. Currently, the foodservice industry is one of the largest employers of non-English-speaking individuals in the United States (National Restaurant Association, 2006). In fact, data show that 26% of employees in the foodservice industry speak a language other than English at home (National Restaurant Association, 2006), and in New York City, home to most restaurants in the United States, 67.5% of restaurant workers were immigrants (Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York, 2003).

Language barriers are one of the greatest impediments to smooth integration of immigrants into a workforce (Loosemore & Lee, 2001; Victor, 1992). The process of communication is dynamic and has multiple variables including one's culture, which include varied norms, attitudes, social organizations, social status, thought patterns, roles, nonverbal behavior, and language (Victor, 1992). Food-service managers often struggle to communicate with non-English speakers (Lee & Chon, 2000). About 62% of Hispanic and 40% of Asian individuals prefer to speak a language other than English. In addition, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that about 11.9 million individuals living in the United States were linguistically isolated—meaning that the person lives in a home in which no person aged 14 years or older speaks English at least very well (Shin & Bruno, 2003).

Therefore, there is a concern over the potential negative consequences of language barriers at the workplace, such as effective communication, misunderstandings, and cohesion in the workplace (Lee & Chon, 2000; Loh & Richardson, 2004). Biases and negative attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals also present potential problems in the workplace. Research shows that Caucasian Americans perceive poor English-speaking abilities negatively (Loosemore & Lee, 2001; Victor 1992) and that non-English-speaking individuals often feel isolation and perceive discrimination from English speakers in the workplace (Castro, Fujishiro, & Sweitze, 2006). Thus, intergroup conflict is a reality and problem that many organizations face as a consequence of negative attitude toward non-English-speaking individuals. One possible way to improve attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals is to create a work culture that respects and understands diversity.

The components of diversity include differences and similarities between and among cultures, ages, races, genders, educational levels, and religious affiliations (Kim, 2006). Tung (1993) stated that cross-cultural interactions may lessen differences and help facilitate adaptation between groups. Welch, Tanke, and Glover (1988) reported that developing cultural awareness within an organization may help employees become more familiar with different values, interpersonal interactions, and communication systems, which are critical for an effective multicultural environment. By increasing understanding and sensitivity toward non-English speakers, organizations will gain a competitive edge through a stable, productive, and safe workforce.

One popular approach to achieving multicultural harmony in the workplace has been diversity training. In fact, a recent survey found that up to 79% of organizations indicated that they use some form of diversity training (Galvin, 2003). Despite the ubiquity of diversity training in the hospitality industry, empirical research examining factors that contribute to its effectiveness is sparse (Holladay & Quinones, 2008; Roberson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2001; Wilborn & Weaver 2002; Weaver, Wilborn, McCleary, & Lekagul, 2003). Therefore, there is a great research need to establish what can be done to increase the effectiveness of diversity training. The current study attempts to address this dearth in the literature by examining perspective taking as a tool to increase positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals. Perspective taking or inducing empathy is putting oneself

in the shoes of another person (Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Thus, the purpose of this study is to test the effectiveness of a diversity training exercise using perspective taking to increase positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Perspective Taking: Inducing Empathy in Diversity Training

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) provides a useful theoretical framework to understand why inducing empathy may lead to more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), individuals tend to categorize themselves and others into groups using personally meaningful dimensions such as ethnicity, nationality, or culture. People categorize themselves and similar others in the “in-group” and group dissimilar others as the “out-group.” Therefore, when individuals interact with other people at work, they do not act as a single individual; instead, individuals perceive themselves as members of a social group using personally meaningful dimensions such as ethnicity or race to categorize themselves and others into groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Hogg & Terry, 2000).

Two fundamental psychological mechanisms that underlie social identity theory are social comparison and self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). First, social comparison is the process of comparing one’s own social group with others. This signifies that some social groups have more power, prestige, or status than others and therefore members of a group will compare their own group. The second psychological process relates to the tendency for people to use group membership as a source of positive self esteem. Maintaining positive self-esteem is seen as a basic motivation for humans. People often compare their own group with other groups. Accordingly, because part of their self-esteem depends on identifying with a group, individuals tend to express favoritism toward their own group, preferring to interact with members of their own identity group than with members of other groups—leading to in-group solidarity, cooperation, and support. The tendency to display a positive bias to the in-group, however, often leads to a negative bias or out-group rejection that becomes more negative in situations in which dissimilarity is salient (Dudley & Mulvey, 2009). In terms of the context of the current study, language and nationality are personally meaningful dimensions and are salient in terms of perceiving differences.

A critical ingredient for creating a harmonious multicultural workplace is to break the barriers between the out-groups and in-groups. One potential strategy is perspective taking—a cognitive capacity to consider the situations from the viewpoints, feelings, and reactions of others (Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Perspective taking requires a person to think and feel what it would be like to be a member of an out-group, which tends to produce a mental representation of the self and in-group (e.g., English-speaking individuals) and others/out-group members (e.g., non-English-speaking individual).

As such, induced perspective taking requires individuals not to think in terms of in-groups and out-groups or “us” versus “them” (Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005). Research has shown that perspective taking can lead to social bonds by decreasing prejudice and stereotypes of others (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004). In fact, empirical research has demonstrated that inducing perspective taking leads to enhanced attitudes toward ethnic minorities (Dovidio et al., 2004), convicted murderers (Batson, Early, et al., 1997), people with AIDS (Batson, Sager, et al., 1997), the elderly (Galinsky & Ku, 2004), drug addicts (Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002), and the homeless (Batson Sager, et al., 1997).

For example, the standard paradigm involves having people imagine a day in the life of a person from an out-group and write about it (e.g., an American imagining what it would be like to be foreigner who does not speak English). After this induction, people show more positive attitudes toward the out-group on attitudinal measures than people who do not participate in perspective taking (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Thus, perspective taking leads to positive attitudes and less prejudice toward an out-group. Another outcome of perspective taking is increased empathy.

### **Empathy**

Empathy serves as a mechanism for why perspective taking leads to increased positive attitudes toward members of out-groups, and in the current study, to why perspective taking would increase positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals. Empathy is an “other-focused” emotional response that allows one person to affectively connect with another, often through feelings of sympathy, compassion, tenderness, and concern (Batson et al., 1995). Conceptualizations of empathy included both trait empathy and state empathy (Van Lange, 2008). Trait empathy involves empathic responding to others as a stable disposition that varies across people as a function of personality or temperament traits (Knafo, Zahn-Waxler, Van Hulle, Robinson, & Rhee, 2008). The current study focuses on state empathy—“an affective state that is elicited by the observation or imagination of another person’s affective state” (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006, p. 435). That is, state empathy is an emotional reaction to the environment. As such, empathy is an emotion that might be activated in a variety of different ways, including perspective taking manipulations.

Research shows that when people actively engage in perspective taking, they are more likely to feel empathy with the targets of the perspective taking, including feeling concerned about their misfortunes (Betancourt, 1990; Davis, 1983), understanding or identifying with their experiences (Egan, 1990), feeling positive about their achievements (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991), and wanting to help or engage in other prosocial behaviors (Batson et al., 2002). A manifestation of empathy involves making positive attributions about the target of the empathy (Egan, 1990). Accordingly, empathic feelings lead to increased concern for the well-being of the others; as such, a person is more likely to have positive attitudes toward others than people who do not feel empathy.

### Attitudes Toward Non-English Speakers

Very little research in the hospitality industry has focused on non-English-speaking employees, which is unfortunate given the large amount of non-English-speaking individuals employed in the hospitality industry (National Restaurant Association, 2006; Restaurant Opportunities Center of New York, 2003). Research shows that a sense of belonging to a culturally or ethnically distinct ethnic group is an important aspect of peoples' identity, and therefore, linguistic differences can lead to perceptions of different group membership (Phinney, 1990). That is, nonnative speakers may be considered out-group members in comparison to native speakers. According to social identity theory, people tend to have a positive bias toward their in-group and a negative bias toward out-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Consistent with this line of reasoning, research shows that attitudes toward nonnative speakers are generally less positive than attitudes toward native speakers (Jong & Steinmetz, 2004; Lindemann, 2002). Research also shows that people with accents or "broken" English (i.e., hesitant or badly structured English) tend to be negatively perceived by English speakers (Lindemann, 2005). G. J. Sanchez (1997) argued that negative attitudes toward the use of non-English languages in the workplace and educational settings occur because native speakers fear that linguistic differences will undermine American society. In addition, negative attitudes toward non-English workers are related to perceptions that immigrants take jobs away from native workers (Jong & Steinmetz, 2004). From non-English speakers' perspective, qualitative studies have shown that non-English speakers often report discrimination from English speakers in the workplace (Castro et al., 2006; J. I. Sanchez & Brock, 1996).

### HYPOTHESES

An important caveat in the literature is that the perspective-taking paradigm uses a cognitive manipulation, namely, participants are asked to imagine a day in the life or being in the shoes of the target rather than actually experiencing it (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). The current study used a behavioral manipulation of perspective taking; participants experienced what it is like to work as a non-English-speaking individual through an experimental manipulation. In addition, the study used perspective taking in the context of diversity training. There is very little empirical evidence of the effect of diversity training and, importantly, what factors contribute to its effectiveness (Bell & Kravitz, 2008; Holladay & Quinones, 2008). Thus, the current study contributes to the literature by testing a behavioral perspective-taking manipulation to increase positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

Based on the literature review of perspective taking, it was expected that behavioral perspective-taking training would result in more positive attitudes (Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Research has shown the positive effects of the cognitive perspective-taking paradigm on attitudes

toward targets. Both the behavioral and cognitive manipulation requires the participants to not think in terms of in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), because by experiencing the world through the target's perspective the participants create an overlap between mental representations of the self and in-group and mental representations of the other or out-group members. That is, research shows that perspective taking leads individuals to see more of themselves in others (i.e., perceptions of oneness or that all are the same; Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005).

*Hypothesis 1:* Participants' attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals will be more positive after the perspective-taking training than before the training.

Research shows that a product of perspective taking is feeling more empathy toward the targets of the perspective taking (Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Thus, it was expected that empathy would serve as a mechanism (i.e., a mediator) for the perspective taking and positive attitudes relationship. State empathy is an emotional response to the environment, elicited by experiencing another person's perspective. By taking on another person's perspective, either by imagining or experiencing another person's perspective, a person feels what others feel. Batson et al. (2002) argued that empathic feelings lead to a perception of increased valuing of the welfare of the target of perspective taking. Thus, perspective taking leads to more empathy, which leads to more positive attitudes toward the target (Batson et al., 1995).

*Hypothesis 2:* The perspective-taking training will increase participants' empathy, which will then increase participants' positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

It was also expected that status role—whether an individual is a manager or an employee—would moderate the effect of perspective taking on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals. In the workplace, non-English individuals are often entry-level employees. For example, the majority of the entry-level personnel at hotels and restaurants are ethnic minorities, including many Hispanic and Asian immigrant workers (Andorka, 1997). Thus, managers in the hospitality industry are often dealing with non-English-speaking employees. The manager–employee relationship represents an asymmetric control over valued resources in formal work relationships (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), and this status role distinction may create differences in the effect of perspective taking on attitudes. Employees are often dependent on their managers to obtain rewards and avoid punishments and, therefore, experience some vulnerability related to their dependency on their manager, which managers do not necessarily experience (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). Inducing perspective-taking manipulations that includes the role of a non-English-speaking “employee” might produce a stronger effect than the role of a “manager” working with non-English-speaking employee, because the employee is dependent on the manager for direction and leadership.



*Hypothesis 3:* Participants' status role will moderate the effect of perspective taking on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals, such that participants in the employee role will change their attitudes more positively than participants in the manager role.

## METHOD

### Participants

The participants included 132 students majoring in hotel and restaurant management (30 men and 58 women; 8 did not respond gender). The majority of the participants (68%) held a part- or full-time job. Forty-five of the participants were Caucasian, 18 Asian, 12 Hispanic, 3 Black, and 18 reported as "other." The final sample consisted of 96 participants who completed both set of measures.

### Design and Procedure

A  $2 \times 2$  within-between design was used, with time (before and after perspective taking) as the within-subjects variable and status role as the between-subjects variable (manager or employee). All participants completed a questionnaire that measured their attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals in a classroom, as well as their state empathy. The participants provided their first and last names for the purpose of tracking their responses over time and demographic information. One month later, the students participated in a perspective-taking exercise in a kitchen laboratory.

For the perspective-taking exercise, students were randomly assigned into groups of three to four. Status role was experimentally manipulated by randomly assigning students to one of two roles: one student was assigned as a "manager" and the remaining students as "employees." The manager-student was provided with the recipe and instructions in English, but the employee-students were provided with the recipe and instruction in an abstract, non-English language using Cyrillic letters. Employing a behavioral manipulation of perspective taking (Batson, Early, et al., 1997; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), both manager- and employee-students were instructed to complete a recipe in silence, imagining that they could not speak and understand English. The groups completed the recipe in silence and used only nonverbal methods of communications. Using a within-subjects procedure, the students completed the same questionnaire that was completed a month prior in the classroom immediately after the experiment. Ninety-six students completed both set of questionnaires.

### Measures

*Attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.* A modified version of the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) was employed to assess the participants' attitudes. Participants made their ratings on 11 items using a 5-point Likert-type scale, anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). An example item is "Discrimination against non-English-speaking individuals is no

longer a problem in the United States.” The alpha coefficients for the scale at both time points (pre- and postperspective taking) were .91 and .87, respectively. Lower scores on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals scale represent more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

*Social-dominance orientation attitudes.* As a second measure of participants’ attitudes, the Social-Dominance Orientation (SDO) scale (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) was used. Participants made their ratings on 8 items using a 5-point Likert-type scale, anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). An example item is “Group equality should be our ideal.” The alpha coefficients for the scale at both time points (pre- and postperspective taking) were .83 and .77, respectively. Higher scores on the SDO scale represent more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

*State empathy.* To measure participants’ state empathy as function of the perspective-taking exercise, a 14-item scale from the International Personality Item Pool (Goldberg et al., 2006) was used. Participants used a 5-point Likert-type scale anchored by 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). An example item is “I feel sympathy.” The alpha coefficients for the scale at both time points (pre- and postperspective taking) were .80 and .79, respectively.

The instrument also included a series of open-ended questions to gain an understanding of what methods of communication worked for the managers and what communication barriers they found. Additional questions were asked to ascertain the manager and employees’ perspective of the exercise itself and to gain knowledge of their learning outcomes.

## RESULTS

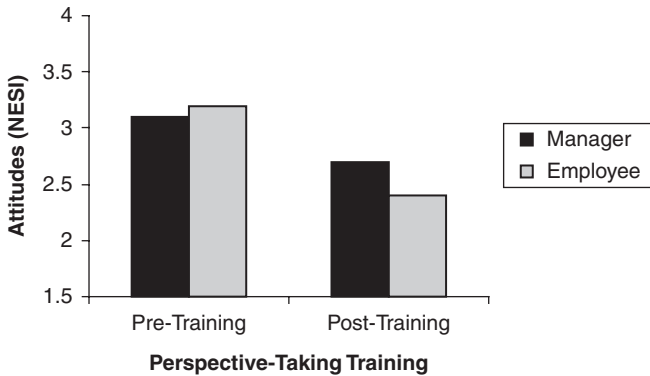
### Manipulation Check

In line with past research (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), participants’ state empathy was measured before and after the perspective-taking training to examine the internal validity of the experimental manipulation (i.e., the perspective-taking training). Presumably, perspective-taking training increases empathy, and this occurs because state empathy is a product of a person’s environment (De Vignemont & Singer, 2006). Therefore, if the participants did indeed take a non-English speaker’s perspective, then participants’ empathy should increase. This is tested by measuring empathy before the perspective-taking training (in the classroom 1 month before) and immediately after the perspective-taking training and examining the change in scores.

A within-subjects analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted with time (before and after perspective taking) as the within-subjects variable and empathy as the dependent variable. The results showed that participants experienced more empathy after the perspective-taking training ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) than before



**Figure 1**  
**Interaction Between Perspective-Taking Training Time and Status Role**  
**on the Attitudes Toward Non-English-Speaking Individuals**



Note: NESI = Non-English-speaking individuals. Lower scores on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals scale represent more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

the perspective-taking training ( $M = 2.71$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ),  $F(1, 96) = 6.68$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .07$ . Thus, the results supported the internal validity of the perspective-taking training.

### Attitudes Toward Non-English-Speaking Individuals

A  $2 \times 2$  within-between ANOVA was conducted with time (before and after perspective taking) as the within-subjects variable and status role as the between-subjects variable (manager or employee) for the two attitude measures: attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals and the social dominance orientation. For exploratory reasons, participants' race and gender was also examined.

The results of a  $2 \times 2$  within-between ANOVA showed a significant main effect of time on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals,  $F(1, 94) = 24.5$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .21$ , such that the attitudes were more positive after the perspective-taking training ( $M = 2.53$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ) than before perspective-taking training ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1 that participants' attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals will be more positive after the perspective-taking training than before the training (see Figure 1).

The results also showed a significant interaction effect of time and status role on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals,  $F(1, 94) = 4.0$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ . Simple main effect analyses revealed that there were no significant differences in attitudes before the perspective-taking training between the managers and employees,  $F(1, 128) = 1.5$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . There were significant differences in attitudes after the perspective-taking training between the managers and employees,  $F(1, 95) = 5.8$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ , such that the employees' attitudes

**Table 1**  
**Means and Standard Deviations for the 2 (Time: Before and After Perspective Taking)  $\times$  2 (Status Role: Manager or Employee) Matrix**

Independent Variables		Dependent Variables	
Time	Manager	Employee	
Pretraining	3.1 (0.76)	3.2 (0.78)	Attitudes (NESI) <sup>a</sup>
Posttraining	2.7 (0.58)	2.4 (0.65)	
Pretraining	3.0 (0.89)	2.9 (0.90)	SDO <sup>b</sup>
Posttraining	3.4 (0.63)	3.8 (0.58)	

Note: NESI = non-English-speaking individuals; SDO = Social-Dominance Orientation. Standard deviations are in parentheses.

- Lower scores on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals scale represent more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.
- Higher scores on the SDO scale represent more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

were more positive after the perspective-taking training ( $M = 2.4$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) than managers' attitudes ( $M = 2.7$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3 that participants in the employee role would change their attitudes more than the participants in the manager role as a function of the perspective-taking training (see Table 1).

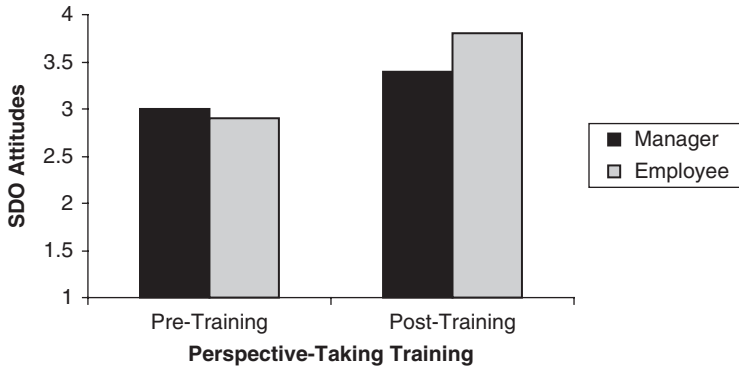
To examine racioethnic and gender differences, a  $5 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$  within-between ANOVA was conducted with participants' race (Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, Black, or other), gender (male or female), and status role (manager or employee) as the between-subjects variables and time (before and after perspective taking) as the within-subjects variable. The results showed that the effect of the perspective-taking training on the attitudes was not qualified by the participants' race,  $F(3, 67) = .78$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ , nor by the participants' gender,  $F(1, 67) = .78$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; no interactions emerged.

### Social Dominance Orientation

The results of a  $2 \times 2$  within-between ANOVA showed a significant main effect of time on the SDO attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals,  $F(1, 94) = 43.9$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .32$ , such that the attitudes were more positive after the perspective-taking training ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ) than before the perspective-taking training ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ), supporting Hypothesis 1 that the perspective-taking training would positively change participants attitudes (see Figure 2).

The results also showed a significant interaction effect of time and status role on the SDO attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals,  $F(1, 94) = 5.3$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .05$ . Simple main effect analyses revealed that there were no significant differences in attitudes before the perspective-taking training between the managers and employees,  $F(1, 125) = 2.8$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .02$ . There were significant differences in attitudes after the perspective-taking training between the managers and employees,  $F(1, 95) = 4.1$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .04$ , such that the employees' attitudes were more positive after the perspective-taking training ( $M = 3.8$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ) than

**Figure 2**  
**Interaction Between Perspective-Taking Training Time and Status Role**  
**on the SDO Attitudes Toward Non-English-Speaking Individuals**



Note: SDO = Social Dominance Orientation. Higher scores on the SDO scale represent more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

managers' attitudes ( $M = 3.4$ ,  $SD = 0.63$ ), supporting Hypothesis 3 that participants in the employee role would change their SDO attitudes more than the participants in the manager role as a function of the perspective-taking training (see Table 1).

To examine racioethnic and gender differences on the SDO attitude measure, a  $5 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$  within-between ANOVA was conducted with participants' race (Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, Black, or other), gender (male or female), and status role (manager or employee) as the between-subjects variables and time (before and after perspective taking) as the within-subjects variable. The results showed that the effect of the perspective-taking training on social dominance was not qualified by the participants' race,  $F(3, 67) = .78$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .03$ , nor by the participants' gender,  $F(1, 67) = .37$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ; no interactions emerged.

### Test for Mediation

Because a repeated-measures ANOVA design was used, an ANCOVA was used to test for mediation (Muller, Yzerbyt, & Judd, 2008). The mediation hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) was that the effect of the perspective-taking training on the change of attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals from pre- to posttraining is because of inducing empathy in the participants. That is, perspective taking would lead to more empathy, which then would lead to more positive attitudes.

The results of an ANCOVA revealed that the previously significant effect of the perspective-taking training on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals was not significant after controlling for the students' empathy scores,  $F(1, 93) = .11$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .001$ . The results also revealed that the previously significant effect of the perspective-taking training on the SDO attitude was not significant after controlling for the students' empathy scores,  $F(1, 93) = 1.17$ ,

$p > .05$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ . Thus, the students' empathy mediated the effect of the perspective-taking training on the change of attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals from pre- to posttraining, supporting Hypothesis 2.

### Results of Open-Ended Questions

The managers found that demonstrating the desired behavior was the most effective method of training. Additionally, the managers stated that the largest communication barrier was describing measurements for the recipes, providing directions for new cooking techniques and enforcing food safety practices (i.e., hand washing, proper cooking temperatures, and avoiding cross contamination). The participants stated that they now realized how frustrating, lonely, and stressful it is to work in an environment where you cannot communicate. In fact, a frequency count showed that 41% of the participants expressed feelings of being frustrated, lonely, and stressed during the procedure.

## DISCUSSION

The current study examined the effect of perspective-taking training on attitudes toward individuals who did not speak English. The contribution of the current study to the literature is threefold. First, little research has examined attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals in the hospitality industry (see Lee & Chon, 2000), despite the fact that many employees in the industry speak a language other than English at home (National Restaurant Association, 2006). Second, little empirical research has examined factors that contribute to the effectiveness of diversity training (Holladay & Quinones, 2008; Roberson et al., 2001). The current study examined perspective taking as a method for diversity training to increase positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals. Third and last, the current study is the first known study to use a behavioral manipulation of perspective taking in a diversity training context. Past research has focused on imagined situations (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) rather than on actual behavior.

The current study found that negative attitudes toward Non-English-speaking individuals decreased once participants received perspective-taking training. By completing a recipe in silence, imagining that they could not speak and understand English, and using instructions in an abstract, non-English language, the participants experienced how non-English-speaking individuals work in the kitchen. The change in attitudes suggests that the participants were less likely to view non-English-speaking individuals as out-group members (i.e., social identity theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In addition, the test for mediation confirmed that the change in attitudes was through empathy. By experiencing non-English-speaking individuals' perspective, the participants experienced empathy, which led to more positive attitudes toward them. Furthermore, participants believed in more equality for non-English-speakers after training. Interestingly, the results were not modified by the participants' race nor by the participants' gender, suggesting that regardless

of a person's race or gender, the perspective-taking manipulation leads to more positive attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals.

Additionally, the results of the findings suggest that participants who were placed in the role of an employee were more empathetic toward non-English speakers than the participants who were placed in the role of managers. The manipulation simulated the asymmetric work relationship between managers and employees (Magee & Galinsky, 2008). That is, the participants in the employee role did not know what to do because of the non-English instructions and solely depended on the manager's direction to develop a menu item and to employ cooking techniques that were new to many. The managers, on the other hand, experienced less ambiguity because their instructions were in English. The results suggest that if someone is placed in an environment where they cannot understand the language and verbally communicate, they empathize with others who face this situation and have more positive attitudes toward them.

Given the vast amount of non-English-speaking individuals employed by the hospitality industry, this study offers valuable practical implications, as well as implications for future research. The results suggest that perspective-taking training can positively affect individuals' attitudes toward non-English speakers. This is particularly important because biases and negative attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals present problems in the workplace and often leads to intergroup conflict (Castro et al., 2006; Loosemore & Lee, 2001; Victor, 1992). Intergroup conflict can often undermine communication between employees and the performance of the targets of the negative attitudes and is related to turnover (Hebl, Madera, & King, 2007). The data are not directly related to these issues; a measure of intergroup conflict was not used because the experiment was conducted in a laboratory with students. Given that attitudes toward non-English speakers were measured, future research might examine if perspective-taking training does indeed reduce intergroup conflict in a work setting.

The results also suggest that managers' communication with non-English speakers is vital in the experience of non-English-speaking employees. The results showed that the employees experienced a stronger effect of the training, suggesting that they experienced more vulnerability and/or ambiguity with the procedure. Future research might explore if non-English-speaking employees experience more positive attitudes when working with empathetic managers than those whose managers are not empathetic toward them. Much like the participants in the study by Castro et al. (2006), the current study's participants expressed feelings of frustration and loneliness when placed in a situation where they could not verbally communicate. To facilitate communication process, a manager must gain an understanding of the complexity that a non-English speaker experiences in the workplace, such as learning the skills associated with a position and the organizational culture (Young, 2003).

A manager's treatment toward non-English-speaking employees is particularly important because research shows that non-English-speaking employees often receive inadequate training and orientation from their managers (Castro et al., 2006).

Learning and adapting to work-related tasks, work roles and responsibilities, group dynamics, and organizational policies is an important process that employees experience (Young, 2003) and is vital for the self-confidence and performance of employees (Adkins, 1995; Fisher, 1986; Louis, 1980; Morrison, 1993; Young, 2003). Future research might examine if non-English-speaking employees experience more learning when working with managers who have positive attitudes toward non-English speakers than those whose managers have negative attitudes.

The effect sizes of the perspective-taking training on the attitudes toward non-English-speaking individuals ( $\eta_p^2 = .21$ ) and for the social dominance orientation ( $\eta_p^2 = .32$ ) were large for social science standards. In fact, a rule of thumb for partial eta-squared effect sizes are small = .01, medium = .06, and large = .14 (Cohen, 1992; Levine & Hullett, 2002). Given the large effect sizes and the significant findings in this study, perspective-taking training contributes to the hospitality diversity training literature by providing another management tool that can broaden awareness of the challenges posed in a multicultural work environment. This exercise can be used by hospitality organizations who want to employ diversity training for the management staff. Managers would have to take the status role of an employee and be asked to produce a recipe based on nonverbal cues from someone else. Previous research (Wilborn & Weaver, 2002) has demonstrated that once employees are exposed to diversity management training initiatives, their perceived level for the importance of it increases.

### Limitations and Further Research

This study is not without limitations. This training module employed hospitality students who do not have formal experience managing people. This lack of experience for the student created additional stress because the participants in the employee role have not worked in an organization that does not use their language. As a result, it is unknown whether or not the effect of the experiment can partially be contributed to this lack of experience. However, a strength of the experiment was that the manipulation created the environment of a non-English speaker working in the United States with English speakers, adding mundane realism to the procedure. The experimental manipulation might have been an extreme environment because the complete silence of the conditions might not reflect true working conditions. For example, there might be attempts to pronounce words in another language or having coworkers that can translate.

The duration of the current experiment was about 3 hours, which was only a thin slice of what non-English speakers experience in the workplace. Future research might examine these issues with a sample of non-English speakers, because it could be the case that non-English-speaking workers and their managers develop effective communication skills or methods over time. Experienced managers may already be using some form of nonverbal communication within their operations; therefore, another direction for future research is to examine difference between experienced managers and managers who have less experience working with non-English speakers.



Another limitation is that the current study did not examine the behaviors of the participants. Future research might use observational methods to examine what communication methods were effective in producing the recipe. In particular, managers' responses to the open-ended questions included enforcing food safety practices (i.e., hand washing, proper cooking temperatures, and avoiding cross contamination) was affected by the lack of verbal communication. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the foodservice industry leads in the number of workplace injuries, accounting for almost 6% of the reported injury cases of the entire U.S. private industry (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009b). The vast majority of accidents and injuries occurred in food preparation areas. Thus, an additional direction for future research is to examine how communication barriers can affect the safety and health of the employees. The results of the current study suggest that safety practices are an important issue that was affected by the inability to verbally communicate. However, frequencies of unsafe behaviors were not recorded.

The sample size ( $N = 96$ ) might also be a limitation. However, a sample size that was equivalent to past research was used (Batson, Early, et al., 1997; Batson et al., 2002; Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004). In addition, within-subjects designs offer greater statistical power relative to sample size because all the participants participate in each level of the experiment (i.e., pre- and posttest conditions). As such, the variance because of subjects is partitioned out of the error variance term, thereby making statistical tests more powerful with fewer subjects (Stevens, 2009). A limitation with within-subjects designs is practice effects of completed measures more than one time. However, by using longitudinal methods—measures were completed 1 month apart—this effect was attenuated (Stevens, 2009).

It is also unknown at this point how long the effect of training will last with participants. Further research with this same sample can measure the long-term implications. Future studies can also be developed by using this training exercise. A similar study could be conducted with hospitality managers from various departments.

## Conclusion

Given the fact that the workforce is becoming more diverse because of demographic trends and immigration and national origin is a protected class under Title VII of the Civil rights Act, it is important for hospitality firms to be proactive in creating a multicultural work environment. Diversity training is one way to achieve these ideals, and the current study provides an important first step in examining methods to increase positive intergroup attitudes and attenuate communication barriers in a diversity training context. In line with past research on perspective taking (e.g., Dovidio et al., 2004; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), the current study suggests that when people actually “puts themselves in the shoes of another,” an understanding develops. Perspective-taking training exercise does indeed foster empathy. Once managers gain perceptiveness of employees who do not speak the language and are struggling to learn, a new sense

of community emerges rather than a sense of in-groups and out-groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). A multicultural environment develops where the employees are given the tools and training to do the job tasks, yet at the same time gain a perspective of one another promoting a culture of shared identities working toward similar goals.

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