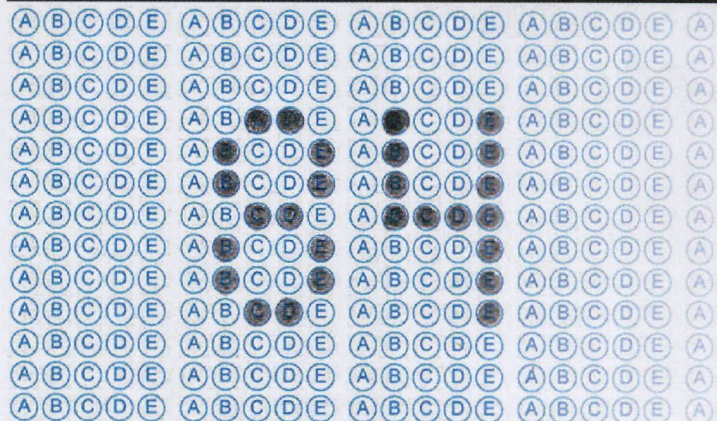


Stat Watch



High goals often improve performance, but they also exacerbate unethical behavior: In one research exercise, the participants given the hardest math problems were **84% likelier to cheat** than other participants, on average. The researchers—**David T. Welsh**, of the University of Washington, and **Lisa D. Ordóñez**, of the University of Arizona—say that demanding tasks deplete people's self-regulatory resources over time, and that managers should be aware of the negative organizational consequences of consecutive rigorous goals.



DAILY STAT

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TALENT by Laura Huang, Marcia Frideger, and Jone L. Pearce

How Non-Native Speakers Can Crack the Glass Ceiling

It has long been illegal in the United States to discriminate on the basis of national origin—but for many well-qualified non-native English speakers, invisible barriers remain a fact of life. One example is the difficulty they experience when seeking executive jobs. Another is that they are less likely than native speakers to obtain funding for entrepreneurial ventures. Two studies we conducted provide an explanation: Many people perceive non-native speakers as less politically skilled than others and therefore lacking the influence needed to be successful leaders or advocates.

In our first experiment we asked 179 undergraduate and graduate students to evaluate candidates for a middle-management position on the basis of a résumé, a photograph, and an audio interview. We

also asked them to assess the candidates' political skills, communication skills, and collaborative skills. The applicants were of similar age and attractiveness, had comparable education and work backgrounds, and followed a set interview script. They fell into two groups: Some were native English speakers and some were not. Regardless of race (each group was half Caucasian, half Asian), the native speakers were, on average, 16% likelier to be recommended for the job. The non-native speakers were deemed no less fluent or more difficult to understand; the gap was entirely due to low assessments of their political skills.

Wanting to avoid possible bias in established companies, many skilled immigrants turn to entrepreneurship. Therefore, our second study focused on new-venture

funding. Do non-native speakers fare better in that world? The answer is no—in fact, they may fare worse. We showed MBA students videos from actual tech pitch competitions without telling them the results, and asked them to evaluate the entrepreneurs for noticeable accents, political skills, communication skills, and collaboration skills. The speakers deemed to have accents were also seen as deficient in political skills. We then looked at which pitches had succeeded. The unaccented speakers were, on average, 23% likelier to have gotten funding.

We suggest several actions to mitigate the problem. Non-native speakers might be able to head off bias by bringing up their political skills. HR professionals should build awareness of the bias against accents into hiring managers' training programs. This is especially crucial because assessments of political skill—a somewhat intangible metric—tend to be based on snap judgments rather than careful consideration.

With the increasing globalization of professionals, applicant pools for high-level positions will include greater numbers of non-native English speakers. Hiring professionals and new-venture investors must recognize and avoid the potential pitfall of accent-related bias if they want to bring in the best executives and make the wisest funding decisions. ♡ **HBR Reprint F1406C**

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Non-native speakers might be able to head off bias simply by bringing up their ability to influence others.

I'm a strong advocate for my team.

I have a track record of listening to clients.

I won't rest until I have the resources to bring this idea to market.