

Immigrant workers represent a key priority population for the United States labor market: Between now and 2035, growth in the labor force will be driven entirely by these newcomers.<sup>1</sup> Though they might receive training on how to interview and present themselves in the American context, there are aspects of their native cultures that will permeate into their job interviews. As organizations equip themselves to recruit, retain, and support these immigrant workers in a new culture, they need to ensure that their employees involved with hiring know how to properly interview multicultural candidates.

In our initial research, we did not uncover any publicly available trainings that build robust capacity for cross-cultural interviewing. Much of the existing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) trainings that help train human resources professionals and hiring managers in sub-skills such as listening with empathy or using respectful language focus on the behaviors and practices that should be adopted, but not on how to actually adapt one's own behavior through ample opportunity to practice and hone these new skills in authentic contexts similar to those in which individuals will eventually leverage them (Molinsky, 2015). We were advised that the topics we want to tackle and the ways we want to address them could be found in qualitative research courses in doctoral programs, trainings created by individual labs doing cross-cultural research, and in programs developed by training organizations that charge a fee.

## **Cross-cultural Interviewing Literature Summary**

In terms of performance objectives the key topics that emerged from the literature include knowledge of self and the other, setting up interviews in a way that creates comfort for the participant, and listening and directing the interview so that the interviewer takes up the expert position. These aspects are elaborated further below.

### *Building Knowledge of Self*

While interviewers may understand the need to know themselves and the nature of their identity in interviews, the need for this capability is heightened in situations in which the interviewer and job seeker are from two different cultures. Researchers have established that the self-representations and positionality of interviewers can evoke stereotypes that influence the feelings and opinions of the interviewees (Mullings, 1999; Subedi, 2006, 2007). Thus, the self-representation and intersection of identities/positionalities of interviewers have the potential to significantly affect participants' levels of comfort.

Another aspect of self-knowledge that interviewers need to consider is that identity is dynamic and complex: the part of their identity they present can be similar or different in various situations and can thus impact how they are regarded during the interviews (Liamputtong, 2021). For instance, while interviewers and job seekers may share social and cultural norms, there may also be challenges relating to class and gender (Kusow 2003; Adler 2004; Tillman 2006; Bishop 2008) that may impact how they are perceived, and hence the quality of the interview.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/03/08/immigration-projected-to-drive-growth-in-u-s-working-age-population-through-at-least-2035/>

### *Building Knowledge of “Other”*

In addition to having an in-depth understanding of who they are and how they may be regarded, interviewers also need to acquire cultural knowledge of the social group with which they wish to interact (Papadopoulos & Lees 2002; Hall & Kulig 2004; Struthers & Peden-McAlpine 2005; Birman 2006; Liamputtong 2008; Topp et al. 2008). This means that interviewers should have a thorough understanding of the culture--including extensive knowledge of social, familial, cultural, religious, historical and political backgrounds (Papadopoulos & Lees, 2002)--so that they do not inadvertently impose their own beliefs and biases. Understanding participants' culture also plays a major role in helping interviewers assess candidates, giving them the abilities to ask more meaningful questions and to read non-verbal cues (Hesse-Biber & Leavy 2005).

### *Listening & Interviewing*

Listening carefully helps interviewers craft sensitive responses that not only reassure job seekers that interviewers are focused on listening, but also contribute to better quality data collection through thoughtful and well-timed probes (Seidman, 2006). Important to note is that listening looks different from one culture to the next: for instance, embellishments, silences, and topic avoidance in some cultures are important forms of information in their own right (Fujii, 2018). Moreover, when interviewers position themselves as outsiders who must be taught, they facilitate their respondents' assumption of the expert position and create a safe space for respondents to share their experiences openly (Liamputtong, 2010).