

Ethnic Inconsistency in an Anticipated Interaction Partner

By

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Abstract

Racial and ethnic categorization has important behavioral consequences in diverse contexts. But how are these consequences shaped if a person's ethnic group membership is unclear or ambiguous—that is, when a person is perceived as belonging to more than one ethnic group, or carrying markers of two ethnic groups? Building from several literatures, I attempt to examine how undergraduates perceive a target whose ethnicity cues appear inconsistent by measuring distancing and questioning behavior. In study 1 ($n = 110$), participants, expecting to interact with a person with either a European American or Arab appearance and either an English or Arabic name, wrote questions, reported expectations, and set up chairs for the anticipated conversation. Participants distanced themselves least from and asked the most questions to a consistent outgroup member. In contrast, those targets with inconsistent cues—those who had both Arab and European American identity cues--were distanced from significantly more, but not as much as from consistent ingroup members. In study 2 ($n = 63$), resolving the inconsistency between name and appearance did not affect distancing, but participants did spend more time writing questions for these targets. Results are inconsistent with both outgroup bias and cognitive fluency explanations. The absence of threat and potential interest to be taken in outgroup members may explain why participants did not exhibit the expected higher discomfort or uncertainty in meeting a person with an ethnic outgroup marker.

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Perceptions of Racially and Ethnically Ambiguous Targets.....	3
Perceiving Targets with Multiple Social Categorizations.....	6
Fluency, a Cognitivist Approach.....	9
Constructing Multiply Categorizable Targets.....	11
Overview of Present Research.....	12
Study 1.....	14
Method.....	16
Results.....	19
Discussion.....	21
Study 2.....	23
Method.....	24
Results.....	25
Disc.....	26
General Discussion.....	27
References.....	36
Appendix.....	45

Ethnic Inconsistency in an Anticipated Interaction Partner

Race and ethnicity are among the most salient identity categories in the United States. In the case of any socially significant quality, categorization is fundamental to social perception (Allport, 1979; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994). Indeed, recent neuroimaging research has argued that differential activation latencies in different regions of the brain in response to faces of different races demonstrate the automatic nature of racial group perception (Cunningham et al., 2004; Ito & Urland, 2003). Social psychologists have long argued that Americans cannot help but categorize based on racial and ethnic group membership, and this categorization process has important pragmatic consequences (Fiske, 1992). This process, usually studied from the perspective of the dominant group, often leads to faulty assumptions about a target's dispositions based on group membership, reaching conclusions that sacrifice the complexity of the social world. Indeed, one issue with much of this research has been its focus on perceptions of targets *that can easily be categorized into a single racial group* (Willadsen-Jensen & Ito, 2006). But as immigrant nations like the United States become more diverse and their populations become more interconnected, we can expect to see more and more citizens that do not fit into one category and can be perceived as belonging to multiple groups, even if prior experience or knowledge would assume that membership in two ethnic groups is mutually exclusive. This thesis presents research that builds on previous work on social group membership by asking, "How do undergraduate students perceive and respond to other students whose ethnic group membership cues seemingly conflict?"

Much of the previous research—especially in its nascent stages—on stereotyping and prejudice can be faulted for its simplistic, overly cognitivist approach, which framed

the processes as primarily residing within the heads of individuals instead of the context that brings about the meaningfulness of certain social categories like race and ethnicity (Adams, Biernat, Branscombe, Crandall, & Wrightsman, 2008). One symptom of this approach has been a focus on the effect of identification with a single social group, when in fact people have multiple or complex social identities. Multiple social categorization (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007) is an example of research addressing this shortcoming by testing the interaction produced by perceiving targets with more than one salient social identity. This perspective can offer a more intersectional lens as to how having crossed or complex social identities (e.g., being an African American woman, a British Muslim, or belonging to more than one ethnic group) plays out in social life.

Another field of research that has complicated the stereotyping process is work on perception of multiracial individuals (Shih & Sanchez, 2009), who identify in non-traditional ways and the perception of whom does not fall in line with previous research on members with “clear” social group memberships. Much of this research demonstrates the distinct nature of perceiving ambiguous targets compared to that of mono-racial targets. Here, the research has focused more on the *ambiguity* of perception. Specifically, multiracials often do not possess prototypical features associated with a single racial or ethnic group and thus are not as easily categorized (Pauker et al., 2009).

In addition to studies addressing perception of racially ambiguous targets and research on multiple categorization, studies on the *fluency* of person perception (e.g., Claypool, Housley, Hugenberg, Bernstein, & Mackie, 2012; for review see Winkielman, Huber, Kavanagh, & Schwarz, 2012) provide a third batch of evidence that can inform the present studies. This research presents a cognitively-oriented explanation of

evaluations of stimuli by showing that “smooth” processing of any kind of stimuli produces more favorable evaluations than disfluent processing (Winkielman, Schwarz, Reber, & Fazendeiro, 2000).

Perceptions of Racially and Ethnically Ambiguous Targets

To begin, some research has directly examined perception of racially ambiguous faces. One of the earliest studies applied the binocular resolution paradigm of social perception to establish the tendency of individuals high in prejudice to use “either/or” criteria to categorize others (Pettigrew, Allport, & Barnett, 1958). In this paradigm, participants are presented two images, one of a White man and one of a Black man, with one image visible to each eye. This visual process is usually resolved by perceiving a single image, and when asked to identify the racial category of such discrepant targets, the response takes one of two forms: Either *Bifurcation* or *Fusion*. Results showed that White South African participants tended to bifurcate the stimulus image as either White or Black. These findings were especially the case for those high in prejudice. The researchers point to these results as evidence for the “simpler” thinking used by those who are apprehensive regarding race relations (as cited in Mullen, 1991).

Based on Social Identity Theory (Oakes et al., 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), several studies further examined the effect of level of prejudice and identification on categorization of ambiguous targets, hypothesizing that high-identifiers with the ingroup are more concerned with maintaining the ingroup’s high status and will enforce stricter group boundaries. Participants high in prejudice (assessed via the Modern Racism Scale) were more vigilant in reducing their uncertainty, measured by nonverbal hesitation and latency of verbally categorizing the target (Blascovich, Wyer, Swart, & Kibler, 1997). In

a similar study that created stimuli of morphed Northern Italians and Northern Africans, highly identified Italian participants spent significantly more time trying to accurately categorize the faces, which is further evidence that high identifiers are concerned with erroneously including an outgroup member in the ingroup (Castano, Yzerbyt, Bourguignon, & Seron, 2002). Another study created targets with “mixed” features by morphing stereotypical African American and Latino faces, and then added a physical marker (hair) that was either stereotypical of African Americans or Latinos. By keeping all other features besides hair type equal across conditions, the researchers were able to assess whether a single racial marker difference would lead to different racial categorization, which would in turn inform perception. They found that participants who saw a morphed target with stereotypically African American hair gave significantly more stereotype-consistent ratings (e.g., wider mouth, darker complexion) than participants who saw a morphed target with stereotypically Latino hair; these latter participants in turn also gave significantly more Latino stereotype-consistent evaluations (e.g., suspicious; MacLin & Malpass, 2001).

Another related line of research that can inform understanding responses of targets with inconsistent features is that of multiracials, who defy the constraints that typically characterize lay and academic race psychology. A perhaps more important, robust literature has attempted to understand the *experiences* of multiracial individuals themselves (e.g., Remedios & Chasteen, 2013; Rockquemore & Brunson, 2002; Shih & Sanchez, 2005), but this was preceded by studies of *perceptions* of multiracial individuals.

Much of the literature on the difficulty and anxiety involved in perceiving multiracial individuals follows from our inability to “efficiently” categorize them into our well-learned groups (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, 2001). The most established evidence for this “inefficiency” is based on memory: Participants were found to remember racially ambiguous faces less well compared to the faces of members of the ingroup (Pauker et al., 2009). This initial finding on the apparent motivated component of memory (i.e., favoring of the ingroup) was followed by a further study that found that ambiguous faces were remembered better when participants were primed with an inclusion-motivation rather than a control-motivation. A mediational analysis showed that this increased memory of ambiguous faces was predicted by the extent to which the target was perceived as a member of the ingroup (Pauker et al., 2009). These findings are consistent with earlier research on memory of unambiguous targets, which demonstrated a consistent interaction between the race of the participant and the race of the target (i.e. the own-race bias; see Meissner & Brigham, 2001 for meta-analytic review). For example, White participants better recalled seeing White faces rather than Black faces, and Black participants better recalled seeing Black faces than White faces (Malpass & Kravitz, 1969).

It is important to note that these perceptual processes are scaffolded by social context: The categories are not “naturally” of importance but rather obtain meaning and relevance based on differential experiences and outcomes based on those group memberships (Adams et al., 2008). For example, the principle of hypodescent (i.e. “the one drop rule”) states that, in the eyes of someone from the dominant group, an American with parents of two races automatically belongs to the more subordinate racial group of

the two (e.g., a multiracial American with one Black parent and one White parent is usually considered Black and not White; Harris, 1964). An empirical test of hypodescent found that, when not given time to deliberate and told that targets had Black and White ancestry, participants were more likely to label ambiguous faces as Black and not White (Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008). This finding is consistent with research on the ingroup over-exclusion effect (Leyens & Yzerbyt, 1992), which specifies the tendency for participants from dominant groups to assign ambiguous targets to the outgroup rather than the ingroup.

Perceiving Targets With Multiple Social Categorizations

The most robust research on evaluations of targets with multiple identities has been covered in the literature on multiple social categorization (Crisp & Hewstone, 2006). In this paradigm, rather than focusing on a single identity dimension (e.g., gender), two dimensions (e.g., gender *and* age) are presented to participants making group-based evaluations. With an added dimension, more nuanced intergroup behavior beyond straightforward ingroup favoritism/outgroup bias is examined. For example, a man and a woman can share a category if both are young, while a young man represents a double-outgroup target for an elderly woman (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007).

The earliest work on multiple social categorization assessed the strength of categorization (i.e., a measure of how much a target belongs to a certain social group) and bias towards simple- and crossed-categorized targets. Building from seminal work on self-categorization (Tajfel, 1978), Deschamps and Doise (1978) argued that, if category differentiation occurs under simple conditions (i.e., only one dimension such as race is salient) and this differentiation in turn leads to bias, then crossed conditions in which two

dimensions are salient should lead to lower differentiation and in turn less bias. However, the most recent test of this hypothesis provided only partial support: When target race (Asian or White) and gender were independently manipulated, strength of categorization decreased in the crossed conditions (double ingroup, mixed groups, double outgroup) compared to the simple conditions, but there was no difference in bias (Vescio, Judd, & Kwan, 2004). The absence of correlations between the categorization and bias measures used in the study further showed that category differentiation does not necessarily lead to bias in crossed categorization contexts (Vescio, Judd, & Chua, 2006).

Much of the recent research on perceptions of multiply categorizable targets has attempted to better understand when and how differentiation occurs and leads to bias. Based on the multiple social categorization literature, at least six patterns of differentiation and evaluation have been observed and proposed (for detailed review and discussion of situational predictors, as well as table of contrast codes for each pattern, see Crisp & Hewstone, 2007, p. 187). In the *additive* pattern, the double ingroup (e.g., for a young woman, another young woman) is evaluated most positively and the double outgroup (an elderly man) most negatively. In the *dominance* pattern, only one identity dimension is important and differentiation within the other dimension is unimportant (e.g., all that matters during the game is that we cheer for the same team, regardless of age; if you cheer for the other team, negative evaluations follow, regardless of your age).

The remaining four patterns are characterized by some kind of interaction between the identity dimensions. In the *social inclusion* pattern, targets receive equal positive evaluation as long as they share at least one ingroup membership with the perceiver; and lack of a shared membership leads to negative evaluation (e.g., a White

man equally and positively evaluating White women and Black men, but negatively evaluating Black women). In the *social exclusion* pattern, any outgroup membership is evaluated negatively, and only double ingroup membership is evaluated positively (e.g., a White man positively evaluating other White men but not White women or Black men and Black women).

The last two patterns are interactions whereby the evaluation of one dimension depends on the evaluation of a more important dimension. In the *hierarchical acceptance* pattern, sharing an identity with someone from a highly valued group can “compensate” for outgroup status within a less important dimension (e.g., for White students who identify strongly with KU, fellow KU students of color are evaluated neutrally; however, K-State students, regardless of race, are evaluated negatively since university affiliation is most important). A variant of this pattern is the *hierarchical rejection* pattern. In this pattern, *outgroup status*—instead of *ingroup status* as in the *hierarchical acceptance* pattern—determines differentiation (e.g., for someone whose allegiance to their soccer team is most important and their White identity second, a Black player on their team is evaluated positively, but a Black player on the opposing team is evaluated even more negatively than a White player on the opposing team).

Two quantitative reviews of crossed-categorization effects generally agreed that the *additive* pattern is the most common (Migdal, Hewstone, & Mullen, 1998; Urban & Miller, 1998). Thus participants have been found to positively evaluate double ingroup members the strongest, negatively evaluate double outgroup members the strongest, and evaluate mixed members in between the two extremes (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007).

A somewhat contrasting independent line of research on the activation-inhibition model of stereotyping states that, based on context (i.e., which identity is made most salient), when perceiving a target with multiple potential categorizations, only one category will “win out” and influence social behavior, while stereotypes of the other category will be inhibited and not influence behavior (Bodenhausen, 2010; Macrae, Bodenhausen, & Milne, 1995). For example, after chatting online with “Amy Chen,” participants behaved consistent with stereotypes of Asians (good at math) when cued with “Chen,” and with stereotypes of women (good at verbal reasoning) when cued with “Amy” (Pittinsky, Shih, & Trahan, 2006). Further studies have replicated this pattern of effects depending on the context for which one of two crossed identities is relevant (e.g., age and gender, Klauer, Ehrenberg, & Wegener, 2003). These studies conclude that in fact only one identity is important in evaluating a target for which information about two identities is provided. One explanation for the inconsistency between the crossed categorization and activation-inhibition lines of research is that crossed categorization studies *weigh equally* the target’s group memberships, and the group membership of the participants is taken into account. In contrast, the activation-inhibition research, by way of some prime, weighs one target group membership more than another.

Fluency, a Cognitivist Approach

An additional perspective on evaluation of targets who might fit multiple categories builds on research that considers the importance of the “cognitive experience” in making judgments (Winkielman et al., 2000). Beginning with the mere exposure effect, social cognition has applied principles of basic cognition to the understanding of interpersonal and intergroup phenomena. The primary assumption of this work is that

when seeing is “easy on the mind,” positive evaluations follow (Winkielman et al., 2000). Beyond repeated neutral or positive interactions with stimuli, fluency can be brought about through synchronous pairings; for example, participants rated images as more attractive when they were preceded by a matching image (a rotated view of the same object) than when preceded by a non-matching image (a rotated view of a different object; Reber, Winkielman, & Schwarz, 1998). By framing research on human targets as analogous to that on non-human stimuli, research has made and confirmed several predictions building from research on conceptual and phonological fluency (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009). For example, participants evince more approach rather than avoidance behavior in response to mere exposed stimuli (Jones, Young, & Claypool, 2011).

Relevant to the present studies is recent work deriving hypotheses from traditional research on fluency and applying it to intergroup relations. For example, while thinking about immigrants to America (a disfluent member of the national ingroup), the amount of difficulty experienced partially mediated participants’ lower ratings of immigrants relative to non-immigrants (Rubin, Paolini, & Crisp, 2010). An additional set of experiments explored the effect of perceptual fluency on categorization of targets as members of the ingroup: White targets more easily categorized as members of the ingroup when perception of the target was fluent, either as a function of visual clarity or repeated exposure (Claypool et al., 2012).

In the present studies of targets with inconsistent features, some of the research on fluency may apply. Specifically, a clear ingroup member or a clear outgroup member, though evoking different responses, may be treated as perceptually fluent (i.e., the

appearance and name “flow together” based on stereotypes). On the other hand, an inconsistent ingroup member (e.g., someone with a European American appearance and an Arabic name) or an inconsistent outgroup member (e.g., an Arab appearance and an English name) may not prove so easy on the mind. Thus, a fluency-based hypothesis states that participants will be less comfortable with and more avoidant of targets with inconsistent rather than consistent features.

Constructing Multiply Categorizable Targets

To review, in addition to fluency, the present studies build from previous research on multiple social categorization by asking how multiple potential categorization options *within a single identity group* are perceived in terms of intergroup qualities, and on studies of multiracial Americans and ambiguous targets, by asking how *inconsistency* may operate similar to or different from *ambiguity*.

The construction of ingroup and outgroup membership in the following studies is based on evidence that both a person’s appearance and name can cue ethnic background and influence behavior. For example, higher stereotypicality of an African American’s facial features predicted harsher sentences from a random sample of current inmates, controlling for the severity of the crime (Blair, Judd, & Chapleau, 2004). A study in which participants anticipated interacting with someone they had not met before found that White participants distanced themselves more from Black conversation partners than White conversation partners if they were reminded of the chance that they may come off as racist (Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008). In a study of how names can influence face perception, participants were asked to rate how “Asian” or how “European American” a set of faces looked. Despite pretests indicating that all the faces shown were rated as

looking equally “racially ambiguous,” participants rated multiracial faces as much more European American when those faces were paired with European names than with Asian names (Hilliard & Kemp, 2008). In a study of the effect of only being provided a name, participants endorsed greater punishment for Ahmad (a name common for Moroccans in the Netherlands) than Alex (a typical Dutch name) even when both committed the same infraction (van Prooijen & Coffeng, 2013). This literature provides evidence that perception of the appearance and name of a target interact to guide behavior. One study directly tested what happens when the appearance and name of a target “interfere” with one another. A within-subjects design presented participants with several images of different popular figures’ face and name. Results showed that participants were slower in stating the name of a person when the face and name interfered with one another (e.g., the face of Mick Jagger, a male English pop star, being given the name Neil Kinnock, a male English politician) than when the face and name corresponded (Young, Ellis, Flude, McWeeny, & Hay, 1986).

Overview of Present Research

The present studies manipulate the amount of “interference” between the ethnicity of the name and appearance of a target to test the effect of consistency on evaluation. Predictions for these studies integrate findings from research on perceptions of multiracials, multiple social categorization, and fluency. Each of these literatures generally concludes that some interaction takes place when multiple social features are salient. First, research on fluency and perceptions of multiracials has shown that an ambiguous or disfluent stimulus leads to negative evaluation and memory. Second, research on multiple social categorization has shown that targets with multiple salient

social group memberships are perceived in a more complex, situational fashion than targets with a single salient group membership, especially if one of the crossed categories is that of an outgroup.

Previous research has shown that interacting with someone from an outgroup can lead to anxiety (e.g., Blair, Park, & Bachelor, 2003), but anxiety has not been tested in the case that the group memberships of a target are inconsistent. I predict that targets will be more anxious if there is disfluency/ambiguity/crossed categorization *within the single social domain of ethnicity* than if there is clear ethnic group membership.

To test this prediction, under the guise of studying in-person meetings following an initial social media-facilitated introduction, participants were shown a picture of another “participant” with whom they would be having a short conversation. Target faces were either European American or Arab American in appearance, and the names were either common American English or Arabic. Participants were thus randomly assigned to interact with one of four targets.

After information about the target whom they would “meet with” was presented, participants were asked to come up with a list of questions they would like to ask their partner during the conversation. These questions served as a measure of uncertainty-reduction behavior. In addition, the amount of time spent creating the questions was measured. I predict that participants will ask more questions about origins or ancestry to targets with inconsistent ethnicity markers than to targets with consistent ethnicity markers because inconsistent targets have a less clear ethnic identity.

Before moving on to the interaction, comfort level for the anticipated interaction with the target was elicited using a five-item Likert measure, and participants were asked

to set up two chairs for a conversation to indicate desired distance from the target.

Parallel to the previous measure, I predict that participants will express less comfort and distance themselves more from targets with inconsistent features than with consistent features, and distance themselves more from clear outgroup members than clear ingroup members.

To further test the *fluency* hypothesis, the same procedure was repeated in Study 2, with the single modification being that, in addition to the same name and appearance of the target being presented in both conditions, participants also read a short paragraph containing background information about the target. I predict that participants who read background information that resolves the inconsistency between the appearance and name, compared to those who read background information that does not resolve the inconsistency, will spend less time creating questions and distance themselves less

Study 1

Pretests

To ensure that participants would perceive the photo and name stimuli as intended, pretests were conducted on perceptions of ethnicity. Level of attractiveness and trustworthiness of the photos was also assessed to ensure such individual characteristics did not differ by ethnicity. No significant differences on these person characteristics would assure that the experimental conditions would only differ in their name and face ethnic consistency or inconsistency. This pretest was conducted in order to avoid directly asking participants about the target's ethnicity in the actual experiment. Results of the pretests are summarized in Table 1.

A total of 42 undergraduate psychology students responded to questions about a person in a photograph. In one condition, participants were asked: “A person of what ethnic background would you be most likely to see the name Hasan Khabir,” and in the other condition they were asked about the ethnic background of someone with the name “John Klein.” As expected, 21 out of 22 participants labeled the name Hasan Khabir as likely to someone of an “Arab,” “Middle Eastern,” or related background (e.g., Afghan, Iraqi), and 18 out of 20 participants labeled the name John Klein as likely to someone of a “White” or “Caucasian” background.

Following this categorization task, participants rated the targets’ attractiveness and trustworthiness using a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Attractiveness ratings revealed no significant difference between perceptions of the Arab face ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .76$) and the White face ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.51$), $t(27) = .234$, $p = .81$. Participants’ ratings of perceived trustworthiness revealed only a marginally significant difference between perceptions of the Arab face ($M = 5.07$, $SD = 1.39$) and the European American face ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .94$), $t(27) = -1.99$, $p = .06$.

In a second set of pretests, a total of 29 undergraduate psychology students were asked to categorize a face presented in a photograph from a set of six racial and ethnic options: Asian, Black, Latino, Middle Eastern/Arab, Native American, and White. To test whether the frequency with which participants correctly categorized the target differed from chance, a chi-square test of independence was conducted comparing the observed and expected frequencies of correct categorization. In the first sample, 14 out of 14 participants correctly identified the Arab face as Middle Eastern/Arab, whereas chance

predicts a frequency of 2.33, $\chi^2(1, N = 14) = 5.66, p = .02^1$. In the second sample, 12 out of 15 participants correctly identified the European American face as White, whereas chance predicts a frequency of 2.5, $\chi^2(1, N = 15) = 4.40, p = .04$.

Table 1

Pretest Results of Categorization and Attributes as a Function of Appearance

	Arab face	European American face
Correct identification	14/14 (100%)*	12/15 (80.0%)*
Attractiveness – M (SD)	3.43 (.76)	3.53 (1.51)
Trustworthiness – M (SD)	5.07 (1.39)	4.20 (.94)

* significantly different from random selection of ethnic category at .05 level

Method

Participants

Participants were 112 male undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Kansas. Participants received partial course credit. The mean age of participants was 19.19 years old. The racial and ethnic demographics mirrored those of the campus community at large, with 4.5% of participants identifying as Asian, 5.4% as Black or African American, 8.0% as Latino, 3.6% as Multiracial, and 77.7% as White.

Since studies have found mixed results for gender effects in spatial distance studies (e.g., Hatfield, Roberts, & Schmidt, 1980; Hendrick, Giesen, & Coy, 1974; Ugwuegbu & Anusiem, 1982), I decided to recruit only male participants to “interact” with our male targets. To include participants of different sexes could complicate

¹ Chance frequencies were calculated by multiplying the 1/6 likelihood—expected from a random

interpretation of any observed spatial distance differences, especially given the ethnic variability in this study (e.g., Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008).

After reviewing comments elicited during debriefing, no participants were excluded due to suspicion concerning either the hypotheses or doubt about the likelihood of actually speaking to another participant at the end of the study. I am an American male of Arab descent who can pass as White (because others perceive me as White) and I was the sole experimenter for this study. I introduced myself to participants with the name “Will” instead of my real name.

Procedure

Participants were greeted in the hallway and escorted to a secluded set of two rooms where they were informed that they would be participating in a two-part study that would last a total of 15 minutes. The verbal introduction and the consent form indicated that the study would assess how people form impressions of people they “meet” online before meeting in person, and how this virtual meeting might affect a subsequent in-person conversation. Experimenters informed participants that once they began the study they would see the picture of the other participant who would arrive shortly and that we would like to take and upload their picture for the purposes of this study. Participants were assured that these pictures would be deleted immediately following the study, which they were.

Following consent, the participants were photographed using a mobile device and then they were escorted to a computer in a private room to begin part one of the study. At that point, participants read initial instructions asking for their patience and reiterating the purposes of the study while their pictures were uploaded.

Consistency/Inconsistency manipulation. At the beginning of the experiment, participants were told they would be speaking with another person who was depicted in a photograph. Participants were randomly assigned to view a photo of either a) a Consistent European American (European American appearance and English name), b) a Consistent Arab (Arab appearance and Arabic name), c) an Inconsistent European American (European American appearance and Arabic name), or d) an Inconsistent Arab (Arab appearance and English name). The assigned face and name pairing was present during completion of all subsequent measures (see Appendix for stimuli).

Dependent Measures

Question Generation. Participants were then encouraged to “come up with any questions you can think of that you would be interested in asking your conversation partner.” Instructions indicated a requirement of at least three and a maximum of six questions to be generated. The amount of time participants spent generating questions was recorded.

Comfort. Before moving to the final part of the study, participants indicated with five items how comfortable they were before their expected conversation (e.g. “How pleasant do you expect your interaction will be with your partner?” and “How well do you think you will get along with this person?”) using 7-point Likert scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*; Remedios & Chasteen, 2013).

Social distance measure. Participants were then escorted to a new room and instructed, upon the experimenter “noticing” that the other participant had not finished the first part and was not yet present, to set up two identical chairs for their upcoming conversation. This adapted spatial distance measure begins with two chairs, side-by-side

against a wall opposite of the door, with empty space in the middle of the room (see Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008; Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974). We measured social distance as the distance, in centimeters, between the middle of the seat-bottoms after the participant had arranged the two chairs.

Once the participant had been given time to arrange the chairs and take a seat, the experimenter returned to the room to reveal that they would not be engaging in a discussion with another participant and to fully debrief the participant about the true nature of the study. Participants answered whether they (a) had any questions, (b) had participated in a study like this before, and (c) were at any point suspicious or had any doubts about other purposes of the study. Participants were thanked and asked to not share the details of the experiment with any friends or classmates.

Results

I conducted a set of 2 (Appearance: Arab or White/European American) \times 2 (Name: Arabic or American English) between-subjects ANOVAs to test the effects of target ethnicity and target name pairings on question generation time, overall expectations for the interaction, and spatial distance. Means and standard deviations are summarized in Table 2².

The results revealed no significant Appearance \times Name interaction on question generation time, $F(1, 108) = .077, p = .78$; no main effect of Appearance, $F(1, 108) = .01, p = .92$; and no main effect of Name, $F(1, 108) = .97, p = .32$.

Results revealed no significant Appearance \times Name interaction on overall expectations for the interaction, $F(1, 108) = 2.01, p = .16$; no main effect of Appearance,

For neither study did I observe any differences as a function of condition for White participants only compared to the when the entire sample was analyzed, therefore this factor is omitted from further reporting of the results.

$F(1, 108) = 1.18, p = .28$, and no main effect of Name, $F(1, 108) = 1.74, p = .19$.³

Results from the final ANOVA on spatial distance revealed no significant Appearance \times Name interaction, $F(1, 106) = .00, p = .99$. However, two main effects did emerge: a main effect of Appearance, $F(1, 106) = 4.22, p = .04$; and a main effect of Name, $F(1, 106) = 5.81, p = .02$. Unexpectedly, participants who expected to interact with a target with an Arab appearance ($M = 95.37$ centimeters, $SD = 28.19$) tended to arrange the chairs closer together than participants expecting to interact with a target with a European American appearance ($M = 106.84, SD = 32.48$). Similarly, and also unexpectedly, participants expecting to talk to a target with an Arabic name ($M = 94.31, SD = 24.43$) tended to arrange the chairs closer together than participants expecting to talk to a target with an English name ($M = 107.86, SD = 30.85$). See Figure 1.

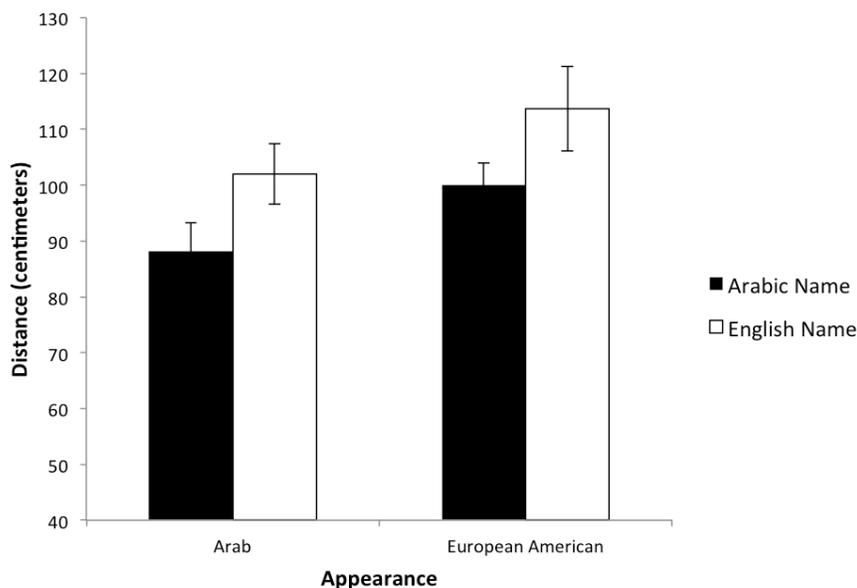


Figure 1. Spatial Distance as a Function of Target Appearance and Name. Bars represent standard errors. The questions written by participants in anticipation of an interaction with the target—the sole source of qualitative data—were coded to operationalize reducing

³ Parallel analyses on individual items revealed identical non-significant patterns.

uncertainty (i.e., attempts to resolve inconsistency between ethnicity markers). Specifically, each question written by the participant was coded as either “origin-seeking” (e.g., “Where are you from?”) or “other,” and then a categorical variable for Origin-Seeking questions was created (i.e., either “yes, at least one origin-seeking question,” or “none”). I conducted four chi-square tests of independence, one for each of the possible two-condition comparisons. The only significant or marginally significant differences emerged from comparisons with the Arab Appearance and Arabic name: participants were marginally significantly more likely to ask origin-seeking questions (92.6%) when expecting to converse with a target with an Arab appearance and Arabic name than when expecting to talk with a target with an Arab appearance and English name (75.0%), $\chi^2(1, 112) = 3.12, p = .08$; and significantly more likely than participants expecting to converse with a target with a European American appearance and Arabic name (67.9%), $\chi^2(1, 112) = 5.26, p < .05$. No other comparisons yielded significant differences ($ps > .6$). Proportions are summarized in Table 3.

Discussion

Results from Study 1 did not verify the hypothesis that inconsistent ethnicity in a target lead to more discomfort and greater social distancing in an upcoming interaction. Surprisingly, consistent outgroup members were distanced from the least, and participants asked origin-seeking questions to these targets most often.

These findings speak the most to potential intergroup interpretations. Study 2 was designed to address the effect of the inconsistency itself, independent of group status.

Table 2
Cell Means and Grand Means for Measures in Study 1 as a Function of Target Appearance and Name Condition

Measure	Arab			European American			Total
	Arabic name	English name	Total	Arabic name	English name	Total	
Question generation time	86.80 (32.35)	79.00 (35.72)	82.90 (34.02)	84.45 (32.60)	80.09 (29.96)	82.23 (31.08)	82.53 (32.41)
Overall expectations	4.5 (1.05)	4.48 (.79)	4.48 (.92)	4.43 (.80)	4.88 (.75)	4.67 (.80)	4.58 (.86)
Spatial distance	88.19 (26.34)	102.04 (28.68)	95.37 (28.19)	100.00 (21.44)	113.68 (39.91)	106.84 (32.48.34)	101.21 (30.85)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses

Table 3
Cell Proportions for Origin-Seeking Questions as a Function of Target Name and Appearance Condition

Name	Appearance	
	Arab	European American
Arabic	25/27 (92.6%) _a	19/28 (67.9%) _b
American English	21/28 (75.0%) _b	20/29 (69.0%) _b

Note: Results represent the proportion of participants who asked origin-seeking questions out of the total number of participants per condition. Proportions that do not share a subscript differ at $p < .08$.

Study 2

Because we did not directly measure perceptions of inconsistency based on the name and face pairing—and it would be difficult to do so without alerting participants of the true nature of the study—the second study manipulated inconsistency; the study consisted of two conditions in which the same inconsistent target was presented along with new “self-descriptions.” Depending on the condition to which they were randomly assigned, participants read a little background information that either explained the inconsistency between the name and appearance (Resolved Inconsistency condition) or provided irrelevant information (Unresolved Inconsistency condition). Specifically, participants in the Resolved Inconsistency condition read heritage-oriented background information, whereas participants in the Unresolved Inconsistency condition read the same background information but without the description of any ethnic heritage.

To keep the design simple, only the Inconsistent European American from study 1 was used for study 2. To include the additional inconsistent target would confound interpretation, since a description resolving the inconsistency between appearing Arab and having an English name would mean something different from a description resolving the inconsistency between appearing European American and having an Arabic name. For example, participants who read heritage information about a target who looks Arab and has an English name might construe this as an assimilation tactic, which White participants in particular might view favorably (see Knowles, Lowery, Hogan, & Chow, 2009); on the other hand, it would be highly unlikely for participants to construe anyone with an Arabic name in the United States as assimilating. Since I was most interested in the effects of manipulating inconsistency, I only used the Inconsistent European

American to allow for a resolution of the inconsistency that did not entail any assimilation.

Method

Participants

Participants were 62 male undergraduates enrolled in an introductory psychology course at the University of Kansas. Participants received partial course credit. The mean age of participants was 18.98 years old. The racial and ethnic demographics mirrored those of the campus community at large, with 4.5% of participants identifying as Asian, 1.5% as Black or African American, 6.2% as Latino, 3.1% as Multiracial, 1.5% as Native American, 6.2% as South Asian, 70.8% as White, and 1.5% as “other.”

Procedure

Resolved/Unresolved Inconsistency manipulation. The procedure of Study 2 exactly replicated that of Study 1 (but using only one of the targets as described above), with only the addition of the Resolved/Unresolved Inconsistency manipulation. First, to avoid potential suspicion resulting from noticing their conversation partner had written a self-description, participants were asked to “give your conversation partner a little background information about yourself.” On the following screen, participants saw the name and picture of the person with whom they would be conversing, just as in Study 1. In addition, participants read the self-descriptions ostensibly written by their conversation partner in the other room, which contained the manipulation:

Unresolved Inconsistency condition:

My name is Hasan Khabir. I was born and raised in Overland Park, KS, and I've always wanted to come to KU. My parents went to grad school

*here. I want to study engineering like my dad and work on the West coast after graduation. **One interesting thing about me is that I'm named after my grandfather.***

Resolved Inconsistency condition:

*My name is Hasan Khabir. I was born and raised in Overland Park, KS, and I've always wanted to come to KU. My parents went to grad school here. I want to study engineering like my dad and work on the West coast after graduation. **One interesting thing about me is that my name means goodness, after my grandfather, who came to the states from Lebanon in the 60s.***

Following this manipulation, participants proceeded to generate a list of questions, report their level of comfort, and set up chairs for their conversation.

An African American female was the sole experimenter for this study.

Results

For the primary analysis, I conducted three *t*-tests to determine the effect of origin information on question generation time, overall expectations for the interaction, and spatial distance. Means and standard deviations are summarized in Table 4.

Participants spent significantly more time generating questions ($M = 154.72$ seconds, $SD = 66.95$) when expecting to interact with a descendant of Lebanese heritage than when expecting to interact with someone whose ethnic heritage was unknown, ($M = 120.95$, $SD = 44.88$), $t(61) = -2.38$, $p = .02$. A non-significantly greater proportion of participants wrote origin-seeking questions (70.6%) after reading the heritage information than after reading non-heritage related information (54.5%), but perhaps due to the small

sample size, this difference was not significant, $\chi^2(1, 61) = .25, p = .62$.

Results revealed no significant difference in overall level of comfort, $t(61) = -.607, p > .5$; an item-by-item analysis revealed identical non-significant patterns, excepting an item asking, “How well do you think you will get along with this person?”, with which participants who had read heritage information ($M = 5.17, SD = 1.07$) agreed more than participants who had not read any heritage information ($M = 4.74, SD = .90$); this difference was marginally significant, $t(61) = -1.76, p = .08$. The last of the primary analyses also revealed no significant difference in spatial distance, $t(61) = -.63, p > .50$.

Table 4

Cell Means for Measures in Study 2 as a Function of Heritage Information

Measure	Heritage information	
	Lebanese	None given
Question generation time	154.72* (66.95)	120.95 (44.88)
Percent of Ps asking origin-seeking questions	70.60%	54.50%
Overall expectation for interaction	4.78 (.80)	4.65 (.84)
Spatial distance	74.25 (33.80)	68.55 (34.47)

Note: Standard deviations are in parentheses

* Indicates a significant different between groups at the $p < .05$ level

Discussion

Participants did not significantly differ in their distancing behavior or overall expectations for the anticipated interaction as a function of the type of background information they read about the target; however, participants spent significantly more time generating questions.

The substantial difference between the two conditions in time spent generating questions indicates that the subtle manipulation of background information, either including ethnic ancestry or not, did influence participants’ perception of the target, but not necessarily their evaluation.

General Discussion

The present research addressed how consistent and inconsistent ethnicity markers of a target influence the social judgment and behavior of undergraduates who expected to interact with that person. Specifically, though research on judgments of multiracial targets (e.g., Willadsen-Jensen & Ito, 2006) has addressed *ambiguity* of perception within a single domain (i.e., ethnicity) and research on multiple social categorization (e.g., Crisp & Hewstone, 1999) has addressed patterns of categorization and judgment of targets for whom information about *more than one social group* is present, (e.g., age and gender), the present studies attempted to measure participants' responses to targets with *inconsistent features within a single social domain*, in this case ethnicity.

Study 1 showed that participants expecting to interact with a consistent European American student (i.e., one with a European American appearance and an English name) distanced themselves further than under any other condition; in fact, while the participants behaved similarly when expecting to interact with any of the two inconsistent targets, participants expecting to interact with a consistent Arab (i.e., one with an Arab appearance and an Arabic name) distanced themselves the least.

Study 2 showed that providing background information about an inconsistent European American's heritage did not lead to more distancing than providing non-heritage background information, but it did lead to participants spending more time generating questions for the interaction.

A straightforward hypothesis based on the social identity and prejudice literatures would suggest that predominately European American undergraduates would manifest intergroup anxiety by distancing themselves most from students of an ethnic outgroup

such as students of Arab descent. In fact, Study 1 revealed the exact opposite (significant) result.

If a chair alignment task is truly a subtle measure of intergroup anxiety, then *hierarchical acceptance*, one of the six previously described patterns specified in the crossed-categorization model (Crisp & Hewstone, 2007), may prove useful in interpreting the results. This pattern is characterized by a person more highly valuing membership in a certain group compared to any other group and evaluating targets with other group memberships based on their ingroup/outgroup standing within that more highly valued group. In the context of the psychology laboratory at a major Midwestern university, with a strong group solidarity ethic embedded particularly in athletic culture, participants may be especially likely to identify strongly with the university ingroup (Branscombe & Wann, 1991). Given the assumption that the target was another participant for the same study and thus a fellow undergraduate at the same institution, this KU identification may “trump” other group memberships. Under the hierarchical pattern, researchers theorize that as long as targets are ingroup members within the highly regarded group, the worst that the target can be evaluated is neutrally, which occurs when they are outgroup members on another dimension. In the present study, since all targets were part of the same university ingroup, ethnicity outgroup status may not have warranted negative subtle evaluation for participants. This pattern still cannot fully explain the present results, since the double ingroup member is hypothesized to be evaluated most positively, whereas in this case KU students of a clear ethnic outgroup were distanced from the least.

To understand these results, it may be useful to consider an alternative interpretation of the chair distancing measure employed in these studies. We can, after

all, just as easily construct the measurement as degree of *closeness* rather than *distance*; the latter affords an understanding of avoidant participant behavior, and the former of approach participant behavior. Indeed, though it applies generally to physical distance and has not specifically addressed such chair measures, proxemic theory (Hall, 1966) frames physical distance as an affordance for intimacy instead of social distance (as described in Sussman & Rosenfeld, 1982) Thus this established perspective allows for an interpretation of the results as—instead of participants distancing themselves less from Arab participants—participants *approaching targets with stereotypical Arab features* more than targets with stereotypical European American features.

One reason that participants may have approached participants with Arab features is not because of *intimacy* per se but rather *interest*. Though no studies have connected the two constructs in an anticipated interaction paradigm, research on close relationships has found that responsiveness from a partner fosters intimacy (Reis, Clark, & Holmes, 2004). Though participants in both studies did not actually interact with the target, the mere anticipation of interaction can foster liking. This prediction has been supported in a number of straightforward studies that reported greater liking when participants anticipated interacting with a partner than when participants did not anticipate interacting with a partner, even though the partner was the exact same person in both conditions (Darley & Berscheid, 1967). Another set of studies found that participants expressed greater liking for partners that they had previously anticipated interacting with, even if those potential partners were portrayed negatively (Layton & Insko, 1974). One explanation for these findings is that anticipating an interaction provides the space for participants to withhold judgment until they are able to converse with their partner

(Sutherland & Insko, 1973). This explanation directly relates to an interpretation of interest rather than distance for this study. Since participants had no information to act upon besides the name and appearance of the target in Study 1, the most interesting or open-to-judgment targets might be those targets with an outgroup marker, particularly given their shared identity in the student ingroup.

Further strengthening an interpretation of *interest* is the possibility that, by allowing participants to ask questions before the interaction, the potential to manifest subtle prejudice by distancing themselves may have been attenuated and the potential to approach may have been encouraged. Participants creating questions, despite their not being responded to in the context of these studies, may have promoted intimacy or comfort among participants. Participants in Study 1 were more likely to ask origin-seeking questions—potential evidence for interest—when they anticipated interacting with a consistent outgroup target, and these participants in turn created the least distance. Related evidence for this explanation comes from studies that resulted in increased interpersonal closeness when closeness was experimentally generated by having conversation partners ask and respond to a series of questions (Aron, Melinat, Aron, Vallone, & Bator, 1997). This interpretation however must be offered tenuously, since the primary theories of intimacy (e.g., Reis & Shaver, 1988) posit that, beyond merely disclosing, *affirmation* of disclosure is necessary to promote closeness; in the present study, questions were not confirmed to the participants as shared or responded to. But providing the opportunity to ask questions, as well as ostensibly having their pictures shared with the other participant, may have neutralized any potential discomfort or threat than might otherwise have been the case.

It is important to note here that the research upon which the procedure and primary dependent measure of the present studies are based found similar results (see Goff, Steele, & Davies, 2008 for complete details). In one study, White participants came to the lab for a study on “diverse conversations.” Photographs of people with whom they would be conversing were visible, and participants were randomly assigned to converse with either two Black or two White male students. Results showed that participants distanced themselves from Black partners when setting up the chairs for the conversation *only under conditions of threat*: these participants were told they would be discussing racial profiling, a conversation topic that pretests revealed to be threatening to White students because such a topic would provide an opportunity to confirm a negative stereotype of Whites as racist. However, when participants were told they would be conversing about a non-threatening topic (love and relationships), *they actually sat closer* to Black partners than White partners, though the significance of this simple effects test was not reported. This similar finding to that found in Study 1 may be due to participants feeling more interested in conversing with an outgroup member, as long as it does not happen under threatening conditions.

One trend in Study 2 also supports an interest interpretation. Both conditions in Study 2 asked participants to write a brief paragraph introducing themselves and to read paragraphs written by their partner following the same instructions. This procedural element may have had the unintended consequence of further encouraging approach behavior of the participants; overall, participants distanced themselves less in Study 2 ($M = 71.35$ centimeters, $SD = 33.96$) than in Study 1 ($M = 101.21$, $SD = 30.85$).

Limitations and future directions

One set of limitations relate to the photographic stimuli that, along with a paired name, served as manipulations. First, the use of a single person and photograph to represent the two ethnic groups (i.e. Arab and European American) does not discount the possibility that something peculiar to those photographs affected the results. A stronger design would randomly assign participants to see one of several possible Arab or European American faces. No differences within each ethnic group would allow an interpretation that the ethnic group membership—and not something peculiar about that *representative* of the ethnic group—was driving the results.

In addition, the pretests only measured perceptions of two attributes. In fact, the Arab target was marginally significantly rated as more trustworthy than the European American target, and this difference could explain the greater closeness of participants anticipating an interaction with someone Arab. Additional pretests of attributes that directly relate to what occurs in a first-time interaction like friendliness and agreeableness would confirm that no unintended factors were affecting participants' responses.

The targets' physical sizes were also not taken into account; participants may have associated the slighter build of the Arab target compared to the European American target with weakness (Schubert, Waldzus, & Giessner, 2009), which could in turn lead to less threat and less distance. Also neglected was the visual clarity of the photographs (Claypool et al., 2012); the sharper focus in pictures of the Arab target than of the European American target may have contributed to the observed differences in distancing in Study 1.

The two studies were also beset by several methodological limitations. First, no important moderators were measured for the distancing and comfort responses. For one, motivation has been shown to account for variability in multiple social categorization studies in particular and social perception in general (Crisp & Hewstone, 2006), and this is especially the case when the stimulus is ambiguous (Bruner & Goodman, 1947). For example, under conditions of threat, participants' curiosity and interest may be replaced with more vigilance in anticipation of meeting an outgroup member.

Identity also plays a crucial role. The present studies did not take into account ethnic identity considerations of the participants. For example, high identifiers may behave differently than low identifiers by being more vigilant in maintaining a pure ingroup (Crisp, 2006). The prescreen taken by all participants at the beginning of the semester included eight items on racial essentialism, a construct highly correlated with strength of identification. Indeed both ingroup identification and outgroup essentialism have been correlated with endorsing less permeability between racial and ethnic groups (Yzerbyt, Rocher, & Schadron, 1997). However, essentialism as assessed weeks earlier in the prescreen did not moderate any of the effects in the second study for which the prescreen was available. Nonetheless, a more context-specific account of White racial/European American ethnic identity in the United States may better capture this effect, since several immigrant groups throughout America's history have "entered" the White racial identity (Jacobson, 1998).

A further limitation is that the present studies did not recruit enough non-White participants to justify separate analyses based on participant racial or ethnic group. A more diverse sample would allow for subtler tests of social identity and categorization;

for example, non-White participants may categorize a non-White target as a person of color, and whether or not they share ethnic group membership, be treated as a type of ingroup member because they are from a fellow disadvantaged group.

In addition, superordinate group membership should be accounted for to test the effects of subgroup effects. That is, if students were behaving under the assumption that they were going to converse with a fellow KU student (since after all we did tell them that another study participant was coming, and was thus a fellow KU student), all of our hypothesized group differences may not fit in this situation; again, such group differences on distancing may emerge only under threatening conditions (e.g. Wyer & Calvini, 2011). A future study may explicitly account for this by indicating that all (bogus) targets are non-students who are assisting with the research study.

Also deserving further investigation is a more explicit measure of categorization of inconsistent targets. To avoid encouraging participants' sensitivity to act appropriately in an intergroup context, the present studies did not directly measure perception of the target's ethnic group membership (see Henry, 2008, for further discussion). Results from such a direct measure are necessary to fully understand the results of this thesis, since there are a variety of ways in which targets (with both name and appearance present, not just both individually as in the pretests) could be categorized that would in turn influence behavior such as distancing.

Conclusion

The present research asks one of the many possible questions inspired by the dynamic ethnic and racial landscape of the United States. Overall, the results are in line with previous findings that categorization takes place based on physical and apparent

features like appearance and name (Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). But the unexpected distancing results suggest that a great deal goes into how this categorization takes place and affects behavior. For example, under nonthreatening conditions and with another shared group membership, people may enter such encounters with interest rather than anxiety. It is important to note that further studies must build from context to interpret the meaning of the categories and their co-occurrence: An “inconsistency” between one pair of ethnicity group markers in America is not identical to that of another; each must be analyzed separately depending on their sociohistorical meaning. Indeed, the changing face of America will require continuous investigation into the many interpersonal *and* contextual factors that promote positive intergroup relations.

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Appendix

Study Materials

Target photographs:



Consistent Arab: Hasan Khabir



Inconsistent Arab: Harold Klein



Consistent European American:
Harold Klein



Inconsistent European American:
Hasan Khabir

Question generation task (both studies):

The screenshot shows a survey interface for the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at the University of Kansas. The header includes the university logo and the college name. The main instruction is: "Come up with any questions you can think of that you would be interested in asking your conversation partner. Please write down at least three." Below this, there are six numbered question boxes, each with a text input field. The boxes are labeled "Question 1" through "Question 6". A navigation button with ">>" is located at the bottom right. At the very bottom, it says "Survey Powered By Qualtrics".

THE UNIVERSITY OF
KU KANSAS

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Come up with any questions you can think of that you would be interested in asking your conversation partner.
Please write down at least three.

Question 1

Question 2

Question 3

Question 4

Question 5

Question 6

>>

Survey Powered By [Qualtrics](#)

Expectations for upcoming interaction

Please answer the following questions based on a 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely) scale.

1. How well do you think you will get along with this person?
2. How likely is it that you would be friends with this person?
3. How compatible do you expect to be with this person?
4. How pleasant do you expect your interaction will be with your partner?
5. How confident are you that you can relate to this person?