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**Occupational & Gender Role Conflict**

**How is Role Incongruence Diminished?**

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## Abstract

The proclivity to stereotype individuals arises when there is a perception that social roles do not align with gender roles (Eagly, 2002). This experiment illustrates gender differences in the way individuals who experience this role incongruence will adjust their association with the two opposing roles. Females implicitly associated themselves less with their gender when thinking of themselves as leaders than when thinking of themselves as homemakers. Females in the leadership condition were also more likely to think of themselves as possessing more masculine oriented traits and greater leadership aspirations. Males did not show a change in association with their gender in the leadership or the homemaker condition, and subsequently did not show a difference in trait orientation and leadership aspirations.

Fortune Magazine recently touted a growing number of powerful businesswomen and stay-home fathers in the United States (Morris, 2002). Carly Fiorina of Hewlett-Packard, Meg Whitman of eBay and Betsy Holden of Kraft Foods are now household names in the industry – women who have finally succeeded in securing the formerly evasive title of CEO. These articles jocularly discuss “trophy husbands” as an emergent breed. “Behind a great woman at work, there is often a great man at home. He is the new trophy husband” (Morris, 2002). Whereas the roles of women CEO’s and “trophy husbands” are on extreme ends of the work and home spectrum, the aforementioned headlines do allude that the lines between previously distinct gender roles of business executives and homemakers are becoming increasingly blurred. The workplace is no longer predominantly male, with 46% of the labor force consisting of women in 2001 compared to just 29% in 1948 (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001a). Moreover, 45% of women in the workforce are in executive, administrative, and managerial positions (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2001b).

These statistics fail to reflect the discrepancies still present in the workplace and in the home. In 2002, only 11 women held the position of Chief Operating Officer in Fortune 1000 companies (Fortune, 2002). Additionally, there are prevalent sex differences in ranks and rate of promotion within the workplace (Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deaux, & Heilman, 1991; Greene & Greene, 1996; Kathlene, 1994).

In situations in which couples reside together, women performed substantially more housework than the males they live with (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). Professional married women averaged approximately 33 hours of housework a week, which consisted of 2/3 of the total household work, compared to approximately 14-18 hours by working husbands (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). These statistics reinforce that the stereotyped perceptions of certain roles are

still valid -- men are more likely to hold high positions in the business world, whereas women are more likely to perform tasks within the home.

Consider individuals seeking occupations delineating from societal gender norms. The pressure to act in accordance to their gender may conflict with the pressure to act in line with the work role (Eagly, 2002). For example, a woman placed in a leadership position that acts in a more authoritative fashion (e.g. more perceived as masculine) and consequentially behaves less communally (e.g. more perceived as feminine) will be perceived as less likeable (Rudman, 1998). In addition to being regarded in this manner by others, it is essential to further consider how this role conflict affects the way individuals view themselves. The questions based on this role conflict are twofold: (a) How does perceiving oneself in a non-prototypical occupational role for one's gender affect one's self-perception? (b) Will men and women differ in their self-perception and self-judgments towards their work and gender roles?

Based on Eagly's Gender Role Congruity Theory (2002), this paper posits that in times of gender and work role incongruity, individuals' self-perceptions and self-judgments will change depending on the status associated with the non-prototypical occupational role. Specifically, women will reduce their association with the female role, one seen as holding a lower degree of status, in order to increase their association with the higher-status role of business leadership. Conversely, men will not exhibit the same self-imposed gender role reduction and occupational role increase when thinking of themselves in a lower-status homemaker role. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed role incongruence alleviation model, which will be further elaborated throughout the rest of this paper.

### Role Incongruity Formation

The *role congruity theory of prejudice* posits that there are several culturally defined stereotypes leading people to form expectations about the behavior of others and themselves (Eagly, 2002). These stereotypes may be formed based on a person's gender role and other roles (e.g. occupational) that he or she holds. When traits expected in one's gender role do not match the traits expected in one's social role, the social role will seem non-prototypical for that individual (Miller, Taylor and Buck, 1991). When explaining differences in behavior between genders, individuals focused more on the behavior and attributes of non-prototypical members in both genders than prototypical members of certain categories (e.g. male elementary school teachers and female voters), suggesting a consistent focus on individuals who do not fit the norm (Miller, Taylor and Buck, 1991). Not only may the actions of non-prototypical members be more likely to be noticed, but Eagly (2002) proposes that the potential for devaluation of a person's actions also will occur when expectations of a social group's generalized traits are incongruent with the expectations of a social role.

#### Devaluation within the Organization

Viewing expectations of gender in concordance with organizational role is drawn from the concept of *gender-role spillover* which posits that not only will a person's role within the workplace be used by others to conceptualize expectations about that person, gender will also become an additional salient characteristic (Gutek & Morasch, 1982). Additionally, the augmented discernment of individuals in non-prototypical roles occurs for both males and females, but evidence suggests devaluation occurs for women in certain workplace situations (Eagly, 1992).

Leadership behavior, such as acting in a more dominant manner, by women will be seen as more pronounced than their male counterparts because it is not traditionally seen to be borne

out of feminine traits, but rather of masculine traits (Manis, Nelson, & Shelder, 1988). In the United States, defined masculine or agentic traits such as independence and task-orientation match qualities leaders possess and defined feminine or communal traits such as nurturance and expressiveness relate to parenting and caring for the home (Heilman, Block, Martell & Simon, 1989). Women who displayed "leadership" traits (e.g. task-orientation) received more negative than positive facial reactions, in contrast to males who received more positive than negative reactions when exhibiting the same traits (Butler & Geis, 1990). Females acting in an agentic fashion were looked upon as more competent, but will ultimately be less liked overall (Rudman, 1998).

Individuals have been shown to have expectations of how managerial figures should behave (Phillips & Lord, 1982). It is not always the case that expectations supercede gender-based expectations. Individuals expect that the behavior of leaders should be more symmetrically aligned with the behaviors of men than with women (Heilman, et al., 1989), even to the extent of viewing females as not suitable in leadership roles (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989) and a preference for male leaders over female leaders (Carpenter, 2001; Bass, 1990; Heilman et. al., 1989; Eagly, 1992).

### Distinctions in Role Status

A central tenet to the potential for devaluation is that not all occupational and gender roles hold equal status. Societies across cultures are generally patriarchic, in which males control the economic, legal, and political structures in society, while subordinate domestic duties are bestowed upon females (Stockard & Johnson, 1992).

The incentives to change roles will differ between these groups, with higher status individuals possessing less incentive to seek lower status roles, while lower status individuals

striving for higher status roles in order to achieve a more positive social identity (Ellemers, 1993; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1978). High status individuals are considered to possess greater influence in determining appropriate behavior, using their privilege to prevent lower status individuals or groups in garnering more powerful positions (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

### Reducing Self-Perceived Role Incongruence

Because women in leadership roles are non-prototypical, they are placed in a situation in which they must choose between their gender role and situational role. For women to self-conceptualize themselves as leaders, it is possible that they will seek to disassociate themselves with their own gender in order to increase their representation with the leadership role. Indeed, low status groups view their own group less positively than members of high-status groups (Brown & Wade, 1987; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985, 1987) and will seek to increase their own status through association with the high-status groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel, 1978). Based on this increased association with leadership, women may show a greater propensity to exhibit masculine oriented traits and increased desire to become a leader.

This construct may not be the same if men are placed in a non-prototypical role. If men are asked to think of themselves as a homemaker, they will also be placed in a situation in which they are choosing between their gender role and their situational role. In this situation, the stigma of caring for the home in conjunction with the masculine identity may inhibit the disassociation from their gender role and association with the homemaker role. In turn, males will not show increased aspirations to become a homemaker. In prototypical situations in which men are leaders and women are homemakers, the gender and occupational roles will be aligned. Individuals will not experience role incongruence, and will not likely seek to reduce their association with their own gender and occupation.

To summarize, women, usually more associated with the home, will see a leadership role as a gain in status and attempt to disassociate with their gender self-concept to reduce incongruence. Also seeking to reduce incongruence and associated more with leadership roles, men will not seek to disassociate themselves from their gender role since there is less incentive to align themselves with the lower status homemaker role.

Recent studies have utilized implicit measures of cognition to gauge changes in attitude. Implicit cognition refers to modes of operations that are not accessible using conscious techniques, but rather are formed through past experience. A technique called the Implicit Association Test (IAT) (Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998; Greenwald & Nosek, 2002), evaluates an individual's implicit associations of self-related categories (me or not-me) and occupational orientations (business leader or homemaker). This method is valuable in two respects. First, implicit measures erase the dependence on the participants' ability to judge their own attitudes correctly. Second, it eliminates the temptation for individuals to answer in accordance to social desirability (Fazio & Dunton, 1997; Fazio, Blascovich, & Driscoll, 1992). Therefore, socially undesirable associations between certain traits and gender may be stronger when measured implicitly rather than explicitly. Attitudes falling out of the conscious realm can influence evaluative judgments (Fazio & Dunton, 1997; Fazio, Blascovich, & Driscoll, 1992).

This study is designed to see if attitude change in self-concept and subsequent judgments will differ when men and women are primed to think of themselves as leaders versus homemakers. It is hypothesized that the desirability of the status of the non-prototypical role will affect whether or not gender role is adjusted. When placed in the higher status non-prototypical role of leadership, women will implicitly reduce their association with their own gender. Conversely, when placed in the lower status prototypical role of homemaker, they will increase



their association with their own gender. When men are placed in the non-prototypical role of homemaker, their gender self-concept will not differ from when they are placed in the prototypical role of a leader.

Second, the desirability of the social role is expected to determine how implicitly associated the individuals will be with that role. Women will associate themselves more with leadership when thinking of themselves as leaders, and associate themselves less with leadership when thinking of themselves as homemakers. Men will not associate themselves with leader any differently when previously considering themselves as leaders or homemakers.

Finally, because women considering themselves in a leadership position are expected to associate themselves more with the male gender and leadership roles, they may also show more masculine related traits (i.e. agentic behavior) and greater leadership aspirations than their homemaker counterparts. Men in either role are not expected to differ on their explicit judgments of these same tasks.

## Method

### Overview and design

The experiment consists of a 2 (sex of participant: male or female) by 2 (occupational role type: homemaker or business leader) between subjects design. The prototypical combinations of the roles are the male-leader and the female-homemaker. The non-prototypical conditions are the male-homemaker and female-leader combinations. Implicit attitudes towards occupational and gender self-concept using the Implicit Association Test (IAT) and explicit self-judgment of gender-related traits and leadership aspirations will be measured.

### Design of the IAT

The computer task, called the Implicit Association Test, evaluates an individual's implicit attitudes by measuring the differences in reaction times between categorizations. The IAT program was written using Inquisit (Draine, 1997).

In the IAT, participants will be asked to match stimulus words (e.g. boy) with overarching target concepts (e.g. gender: male and female) (see Table 1). Two sets of target concepts will be employed within each task.

Participants will be presented a computer screen with a black background. On the computer screen, reminder labels of one set of target concepts (e.g., Male and Female) will be in blue lettering, with one reminder label on the upper-left side of the screen and the other reminder label on the upper-right side of the screen. The other set of reminder labels (e.g., Me and They) will be in white lettering and similarly placed below the blue set of reminder labels. Reminder labels will be positioned above the stimuli word that would appear in the center of the screen (see Figure 2). Each stimuli word that appears is matched to the color of the target concept it represents.

When the stimuli word appears in the center of the screen, participants will press the "a" key if the stimuli word matches the target concept on the left side of the screen, and the ";" key if the stimuli word matches the target concept of the right side of the screen. The use of computer keys will be limited to the "a" key and the ";" key. A correct response is required to advance to the next categorization. Incorrect responses result in a red X appearing on the screen below the stimuli word. An example of an incorrect response is when a participant presses the "a" key when the stimuli word matches the target concept on the right side of the screen. Pressing the correct response key amends inaccurate responses.

Certain combinations of concepts will be classified more quickly and easily. Figure 2 illustrates a schematic description of the IAT that consists of a sequence of four trials. In the first trial, participants will learn how to classify target concepts using the two pre-assigned keys on the computer. The first set is represented by target concepts 1 and 2; the second set is represented by target concepts A and B (see Table 1). A target concept from the first set and one from the second set will be assigned to a response by left hand ('a') (i.e. target concepts 1+A), whereas the remaining target concepts were assigned to a response by the right hand (';') (i.e. target concepts 2+B).

Participants will categorize each stimulus word into the correct target concept category using the specified response keys. For example, in Task 1, participants will classify stimulus words representing **Male** (e.g., Boy, Man) and **Me** (e.g., Me, Mine) with a response in the left hand, and stimulus words that representing **Female** (e.g., Girl, Woman) and **They** (e.g., Them, Theirs) with a response in the right hand. After each correct categorization, the trial will continue with the classification of the next stimulus word appearing on the screen.

Each IAT task will consist of four blocks of trials. The first block gives participants the opportunity to practice the task without having their responses recorded. The second block consists of a longer trial with recorded responses. The third and fourth blocks adapt the same design as the first two blocks with one modification: one set of target concepts reversed response keys (i.e. Trial 3: Target concept 1+B and Target concept 2+A).

The following example illustrates a complete IAT task: participants in Task 1 perform the first and second block (practice 1 and critical 1 trials) by classifying **Male** and **Me** stimulus words by a response with the left hand, and **Female** and **They** stimulus words by a response in the right hand (see Figure 3). In the third and fourth blocks (practice 2 and critical 2 trials),

participants classify **Male** and **They** stimulus words with a left hand response, and **Female** and **Me** stimulus words with a right hand response (see Figure 4). Weaker category associations yield slower and less accurate responses, providing a measure of implicit association.

### Participants

Undergraduate students at Northwestern University will participate in exchange for monetary payment of ten dollars. Paid participants will be solicited through flyers posted on campus.

### Materials

Stimuli. The three concepts include self-related categories (e.g. me or they) and social groups (e.g. males or females, leaders or homemakers). Each category includes five stimulus words. The categories and stimuli are listed in Table 1.

IAT. Participants complete the IAT tasks on an IBM microcomputer.

Questionnaire. Participants complete a paper-pencil questionnaire assessing their explicit attitudes toward leadership and profession. All items on the questionnaire are listed in Appendix A. Questions one and two consist of 7-point semantic scales. Eight adjectives, 4 masculine and 4 feminine, were selected from Bem's (1984) sex role inventory. In question one, participants are asked to rate their ideal and actual self-evaluation of these traits. The adjectives are listed in Table 2. Question two consists of rating their ideal and actual self-evaluation of their leadership aspirations. Question three asks participants to supply the following demographic information: age, year in school, major, and first spoken language. The information about each participant will remain confidential.

### Procedure

Participants will be individually tested in separate rooms. First, participants will complete a priming task in which they are randomly assigned to a condition and asked to think of themselves as a leader or a homemaker.

Half the participants will be placed in the leader condition. Individuals will be asked to write a passage imagining themselves as a leader and their ideal goals and aspirations about becoming a leader. Half the participants will be male and half female. For females, this condition will be the non-prototypical role, whereas for the males, it will be the prototypical role.

The other half of the participants will be placed in the homemaker role. Individuals will be asked to write a passage about their ideal goals about taking care of the family. Half the participants will be male and the other half female. This role will be prototypical for females, but non-prototypical for males.

#### Experimental Manipulation

Participants in the leadership condition will be asked to read and respond to the following: Throughout one's education at Northwestern, emphasis is placed on training the next generation of leaders. Please describe your professional plans and aspirations for the future, who you would like to be and what activities would you like to pursue. We are interested in learning about your ideal situation.

Participants in the homemaker condition will be asked to read and respond to the following passage: In today's fast-paced society, it is important to always spend ample time with your family and loved ones. Please imagine yourself as staying home to care for the home and family. Describe what your plans would be regarding raising a family for the future. How would care for the home? We are interested in learning about your ideal situation.

Next, participants will complete two IAT tasks consecutively. Prior to the two tasks, participants will be given two practice blocks (i.e. categorization and reverse categorization) consisting of **flower** and **insect** categories and evaluative categories (i.e. **good** and **bad**). The administration of these blocks will give participants the opportunity to fully understand and become proficient in the IAT task without identifying the critical tasks. The two critical tasks include measures of automatic gender identity and automatic status identity (e.g. leader or helper). Table 1 describes the categories and stimuli used in each task. Each practice trial consists of 24 categorizations, and each critical trial consists of 40 categorizations. Only the data from the critical trials will be used for data collection purposes. An equal number of stimuli words from each target concept appeared in each trial. The appearance of stimuli words will be randomized within each block trial. The ordering of the category pairings will be counterbalanced and trials counterbalanced across participants. All instructions will be given and responses recorded by the computer. Since reaction time is the primary dependent variable for the measures, the importance of speed and accuracy will be stressed to the participants. After completion of the computer task, participants will be asked to fill out a questionnaire. The questionnaire will contain semantic differential scales and demographic questions. Participants will be fully debriefed and thanked.

Table 1 – IAT Task Concepts

	<b>Task 1</b>		<b>Task 2</b>	
<b>Task Description</b>	<b>Gender identity</b>		<b>Role identity</b>	
<b>Target Concepts</b>	<b>Male (1)</b>	<b>Female (2)</b>	<b>Business Leader (1)</b>	<b>Homemaker (2)</b>
<b>Stimulus words</b>	Boy He Male Man Mister	Female Girl Lady She Woman	BOSS CEO Director Leader President	Children Domestic Family Home Household
<b>Target Concepts</b>	<b>Me (A)</b>	<b>They (B)</b>	<b>Me (A)</b>	<b>They (B)</b>
<b>Stimulus words</b>	I Me Mine My Myself	Their Theirs Them Themselves They	I Me Mine My Myself	Their Theirs Them Themselves They

Implicit associations are measured by taking the Reaction Time (RT) for 1A and 2B combinations subtracted by the RT for 1B and 2A combinations. In task 1, the implicit association is the RT for Me+Male and They+Female combinations minus the RT for Me+Female and They+Male combination.

Table 2. Gender stereotyped adjectives

<b>Masculine Traits</b>	<b>Feminine Traits</b>
Assertive Self-assured Confident Ambitious	Sympathetic Compassionate Understanding Sensitive



Figure 1. Self-concept model of the alleviation of role incongruence.

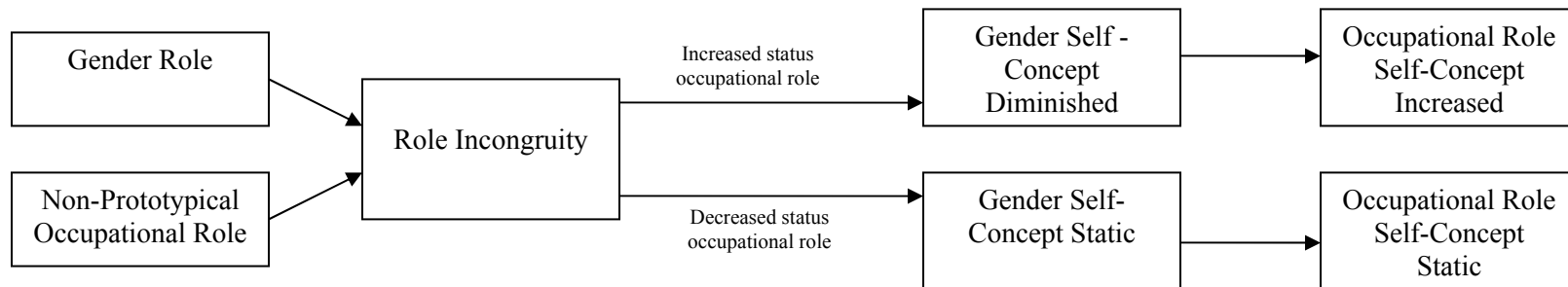
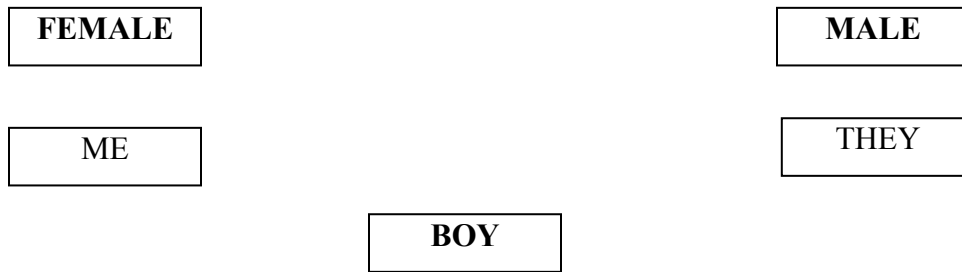


Figure 2. Schematic description of the Implicit Association Task

Sequence	1	2	3	4
<b>Task description</b>	<b>Target concepts combined tasks Practice</b>	<b>Target concepts combined tasks Critical</b>	<b>Reversed Target discrimination Practice</b>	<b>Reversed Target discrimination Critical</b>
<b>Task instructions</b>	+ LEADER + Me DOMESTIC + They +	+ LEADER + Me HOME + They +	+ LEADER + They FAMILY + Me +	+ LEADER + They HOUSEHOLD + + Me +
<b>Sample stimuli</b>	+ BOSS  Them +	+ CEO  DOMESTIC +	HOME + CHILDREN + + Them	+ They + BOSS HOME +
	+ CEO HOME +	+ Mine + LEADER	+ DIRECTOR Mine +	Mine + My +
	CHILDREN + + My Their +	FAMILY + Their + + My	+ PRESIDENT + Theirs Myself +	+ LEADER FAMILY + + Theirs

The IAT procedure consisted of a series of 4 consecutive steps. The first two steps present two sets of target concepts that are classified using the same response key (e.g., LEADER+me). Whether the response keys are classified using the left or right hand is indicated by the + sign. The third and fourth tasks recombine the classifications such that one set of target concepts are reversed and share different response keys.

Figure 3. IAT right hand classification representation



Correct response: right hand classification.

Figure 4. IAT left hand classification representation



Correct response: left hand classification.

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## Appendix A

We are interested in an assessment of traits about yourself. For the majority of items you will first assess the way things are, and then assess the way you think they ought to be. There is no right or wrong answer, so please answer as honestly as possible. Do not spend too much time on each item -- your first response is as good as any.

1) Please indicate how well each of the following traits describes YOU by using the scale shown below. Place the number that best describes you next to each adjective.

ME:	strongly unlike me		equally like me or unlike me		strongly like me								
		----- ----- ----- ----- -----											
	-3		-2		-1		0		1		2		3
sympathetic		_____		understanding		_____							
assertive		_____		confident		_____							
self-assured		_____		ambitious		_____							
compassionate		_____		sensitive		_____							

2) Please indicate how you **ideally** would want the following traits to describe YOURSELF by using the scale shown below. Place the number that best describes your ideals next to each trait.

IDEAL	strongly unlike me		equally like me or unlike me		strongly like me								
		----- ----- ----- ----- -----											
	-3		-2		-1		0		1		2		3
sympathetic		_____		understanding		_____							
assertive		_____		confident		_____							
self-assured		_____		ambitious		_____							
compassionate		_____		sensitive		_____							



### 3) Professional Desires

Imagine the figures below represent two corporate ladders.

- Under the 'Ideal' Corporate Ladder, please check off the rung you ideally aspire to be on in the future.
- Under the 'Real' Corporate Ladder, please check off the rung you expect to be on in the future .

<u>Ideal</u>		<u>Real</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	1 (e.g. CEO)	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	5	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	6	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	7 (e.g. Caregiver)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please answer the following questions about yourself. All information will be kept confidential.

Year in school \_\_\_\_\_

(Upcoming academic year)

Major \_\_\_\_\_

Age \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity \_\_\_\_\_

Were you born in the United States?    Yes                  No

    If not, how many years have you lived in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_

Is English your first language?                  Yes                  No

    If not, how long have you spoken English fluently? \_\_\_\_\_