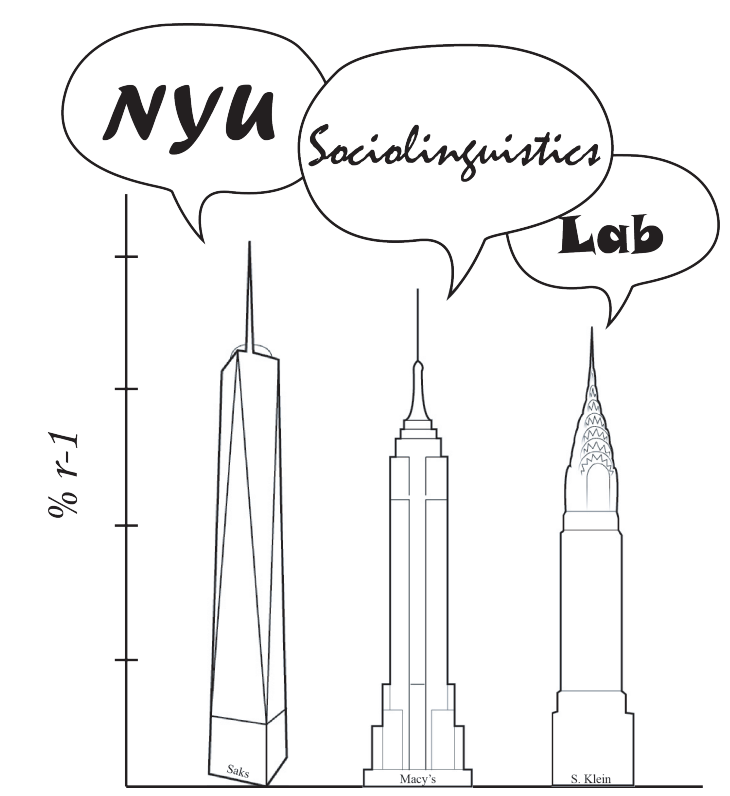




# What it means when you say my name (right): Subjective evaluations of the linguistic reproduction of names

Zachary Jagers<sup>1</sup>, Anaïs Elkins<sup>1</sup>, Renée Blake<sup>1</sup>, Natalie Povilonis de Vilchez<sup>1</sup>, Luciene Simões<sup>2</sup>, Matthew Stuck<sup>3</sup>  
<sup>1</sup>New York University; <sup>2</sup>Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul; <sup>3</sup>Graduate Center, CUNY



## Background

- Speaking more or less like someone else can carry social meaning, such as attitude toward or shared identity with that person or associated group(s). (e.g., Bell 1984, Giles et al. 1991, Eckert 2004, Babel 2010)
- This is particularly apparent with more semi-arbitrary linguistic variables, like loanwords and names:
  - More source-like pronunciation of loanwords correlates with more positive attitudes toward the source and other factors like political identity, multilingualism, globalism, and socioeconomic status. (Weinreich 1968:27, Lev-Ari et al. 2014, Hall-Lew et al. 2010, Silva et al. 2011, Boberg 1999)
  - The use of Anglicized mispronunciations of persons' names is analyzed as 'othering' and 'indexical bleaching': members of minority groups frequently hear their names, linguistic forms which they personally identify with, adapted to pronunciations they don't as strongly identify with. (Kohli and Solórzano 2012, Bucholtz 2016)

## Study Aims

- Test if listeners *perceive* name (mis)pronunciations along similar factors identified in variation and qualitative analysis.
- Analyze how evaluations are mediated by <sup>1</sup> a name variant's indexation as canonically "Anglo"- vs. "non-Anglo"-sounding, and/or <sup>2</sup> whether a listener identifies as a person of color.

## Methods

- online pseudo-matched-guise experiment (via Qualtrics)
  - snowball social network recruiting (N = 134)
- listen to short audio clips of conversation betw Speakers A & B
- rate Speaker A along social trait spectra (7-point Likert)

## Stimuli

- 3 dialogues: casual small talk, self-introductions (~1min)
- Speaker A = Repeater; Speaker B = NameHolder
- name of interest pre-variable (e.g., [nə'tʰæljə]~[nə'tʰɑljə])

1. Match, "Anglo": 'Natalia' [nə'tʰæljə] → [nə'tʰæljə]
2. Match, "non-Anglo": 'Andrea' [an'di:ə] → [an'di:ə]
3. Mismatch\*, a) "Anglo" → "non-Anglo": 'Isabela' [ɪzə'bɛlə] → [isa'bela]  
b) "non-Anglo" → "Anglo": [isa'bela] → [ɪzə'bɛlə]

\*Mismatch direction evenly randomized across participants.

## Results

- Match (■) rated more:
  - sociable, friendly, willing to befriend, polite, cooperative, and politically liberal (significant main effects)
- Mismatch (□) rated more:
  - likely multilingual, when → non-Anglo (◊)
  - likely white-collar, especially by POC listeners when → Anglo (○)
- Enhanced/mediated effects:
  - mismatch rated less polite and more politically conservative by POC (□), especially when → Anglo (○)
  - mismatch rated as more attractive by POC when → non-Anglo (◊)
  - mismatch → Anglo rated more sociable by White listeners (○)
- Reversed effects:
  - POC associate mismatch (□) with higher socioeconomic status
  - mismatch → Anglo rated as less willing to befriend and less intelligent by POC (○)

## Conclusions and Discussion

- Name reproduction, in many ways, activates social evaluations that mirror how it is observed to pattern.
- Main effects of match-vs.-mismatch on factors like agreeableness, politeness, and cooperativeness suggest that name exchanging can serve as a platform for...
  - 'facework': accurately reproducing as face-maintaining vs. face-threatening (Goffman 1955)
  - 'speech accommodation': aligning with or diverging from the other (Giles et al. 1991)
- Different indexations by ethnic identity groups suggest different personal or shared experiences.
  - White listeners consider Anglicization more sociable than POC listeners. And befriendability shows a reversal: White listeners are *more* willing to befriend someone who Anglicizes; POC listeners, *less* willing.
  - POC listeners more strongly associate Anglicization with political conservatism and social capital (occupation).
  - White listeners associate Anglicization with *more* intelligence; POC listeners, with *less* intelligence. This suggests an asymmetry in linguistic security. ('Intelligence' often serves as a proxy for 'correctness' in subjective evaluations of language: Preston 1999)

