

# Analyzing Assumptions

**Purpose:** Examine how the assumptions we make about people and groups can impact how we choose to react to and interact with others.

## ADVISOR NOTES:

### 1. Important Facing History Activities

Activities 42–45 work well together, so, if possible, try to use them in consecutive advisory meetings to help your advisees consider how assumptions can lead to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination.

**APPROXIMATE TIME:**  
30 minutes

#### MATERIALS:

 **IMAGE**  
Street Calculus

 **HANDOUT**  
My Street Calculus

## PROCEDURE:

### 1. Reflect in a Journal Response on Assumptions People Can Make

Begin the activity by giving advisees a few minutes to write in their journals in response to the following questions. Let them know that they will not be sharing their responses with their peers.

- Has someone ever made an assumption about you because of some aspect of your identity or because of a group that you belong to?
- Was it a positive assumption or a negative one?
- How did you find out about the assumption? How did you respond?

### 2. Analyze a Garry Trudeau Cartoon

- Project or pass out the image **Street Calculus** and discuss first impressions of the cartoon using the following questions:
  - What's happening in this image?
  - What do you notice about what each person is thinking in his thought bubble?
  - How are each of their thoughts similar? How are they different?
- Next, analyze the cartoon more deeply by having advisees discuss the following questions in small groups:
  - Do you think the situation depicted here is realistic?
  - Do people use similar "lists" to make judgments about each other?
  - How aware do you think people are of the lists they make?

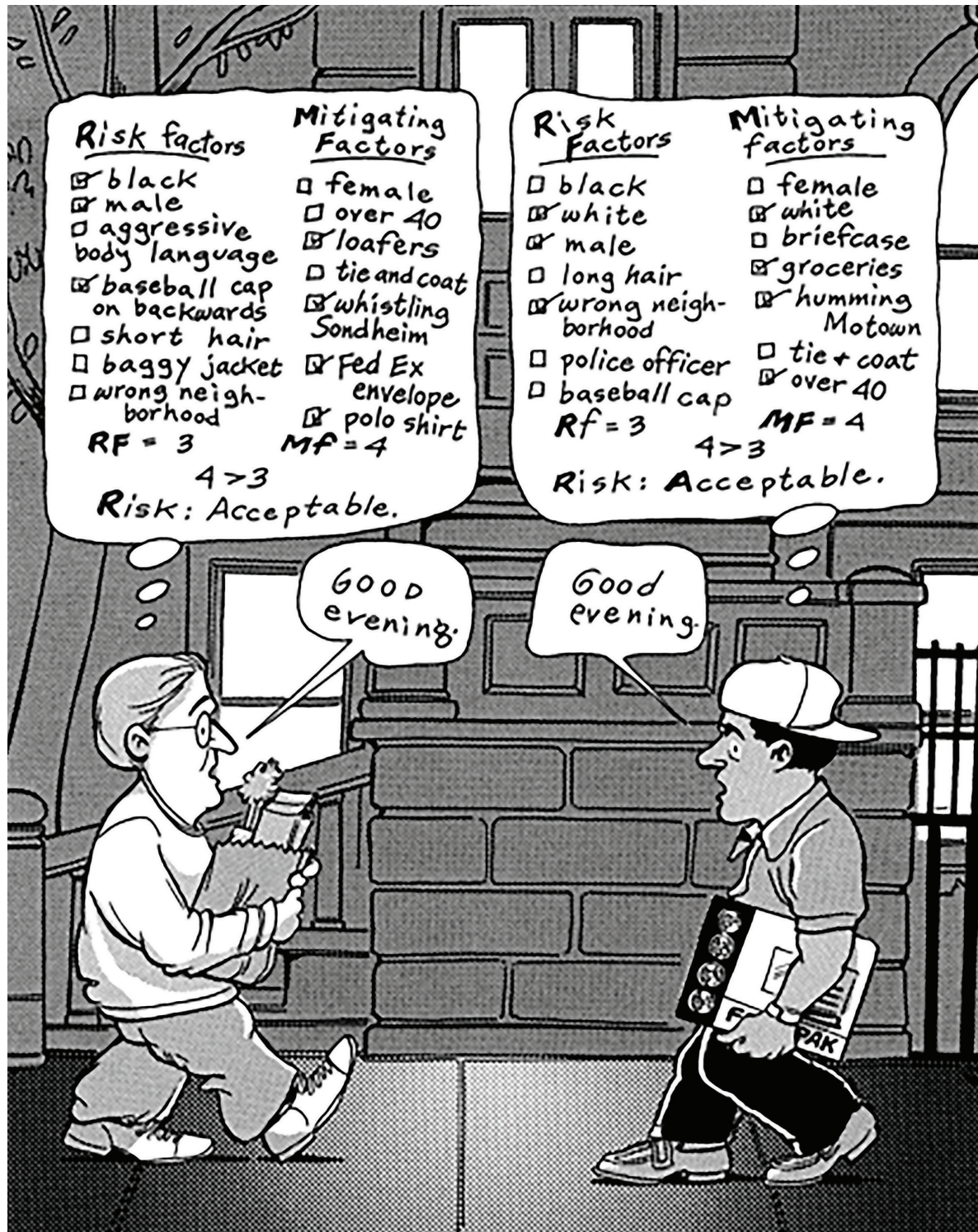
- When someone sees you walking down the hallway at school or down the street, what lists might they make about you?
- What lists do you sometimes make about others?
- How might these lists shape the choices people make (beyond greeting each other)?
- What would it take to change the lists people make about each other?

### 3. Create Your Own “Street Calculus”

- Pass out the handout **My Street Calculus**. Working individually or in pairs, invite advisees to create their own “Street Calculus” cartoons that reflect an encounter that could happen in their school or local community. They should create two characters and discuss their physical appearances, mitigating factors, risk factors, and the final “street calculus.”
- After they have created their cartoons, invite advisees to share with the class, using a document camera to project their images if you have one available.



## Street Calculus



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Garry Trudeau's cartoon from the *Doonesbury* comic strip comments on the calculations we make about one another.



# My Street Calculus

**Directions:** Make your own “Street Calculus” cartoon that reflects an encounter that could happen at your school or in your community. Envision your characters, discuss their physical appearance, and decide on a setting. You can sketch these details in the cartoon frame. Then list the possible risk and mitigating factors and calculate how each character assesses the risk of their encounter with the other.

1. Who are the characters and what do they look like?
2. What is the setting?
3. List two or three significant factors that affect the way the characters react to one another, and explain why they are important.