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Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society

Title

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Journal

Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, 40(0)

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Publication Date

2018

Black Dialect Activates Violent Stereotypes

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Abstract

After viewing Black males faces, US participants are typically faster to categorize weapons and slower to categorize tools than after viewing White male faces, revealing the activation of implicit stereotypes linking Black males with violent crime. Here we tested whether hearing Black male voices speaking in African American Vernacular English (AAVE) activates these same threat-related stereotypes. In a national US sample, participants were faster to categorize weapons compared to tools after hearing race-neutral names spoken in AAVE than after hearing them spoken in Standard American English (SAE). Like Black faces, Black voices can activate violent stereotypes, affecting visual discrimination of objects.

Keywords: implicit bias; race; dialect; AAVE