

PLEASE RETURN THIS TO THE EXPERIMENTER AFTER READING**Stereotypes and Language Processing**

The connection between language processing and stereotypes is not fully understood. People generally take longer to process unexpected language than expected language. If you read or hear something that is completely unexpected, you will generally need to think about it a bit longer before fully comprehending it, than when you read or hear something that is more predictable.

Some previous studies have shown that the same appears to be true for stereotypes. That is, if a person hears a speaker say something that by itself is not surprising or unusual, but which goes against some implicit stereotypical view the listener has of the speaker, then extra comprehension time is required. For example, it may not be particularly surprising to hear a 28-year-old truck driver say, "I want to get a large tattoo on my back". Tattoos are currently very popular and, perhaps more importantly, our common stereotypes about young, working-class males are consistent with getting a tattoo. However, it would probably be fairly surprising to hear a 59-year-old university professor say the same thing, because our stereotypes about university professors generally do not include tattoos. A previous study suggested that this kind of stereotype-based surprise had a significant impact on how difficult it was for people to comprehend such sentences.

The study you just participated in goes one step further and investigates whether additional information about the speaker can influence how easy or hard it is for readers to comprehend sentences that contain stereotype-based surprise. For example, if you also knew that the 59-year-old university professor above likes to go drinking with his friends, playing poker, and riding his Harley Davidson, that information might be enough to overcome the stereotype-based surprise about him wanting to get a tattoo. If so, it would suggest that the common stereotype-based information that we often use to make quick judgments in everyday situations (and which can sometimes lead to negative, classist, racist, sexist, or otherwise harmful conclusions) is relatively weak compared to more specific information about that particular speaker. On the other hand, if speaker-specific information does not minimize the surprisingness of such sentences, then it would suggest that the effect of stereotypes is quite strong and difficult to overcome.

The results of this study will hopefully help us to answer this important question. The reason you had to use the space bar to read certain sentences was because it allowed us to precisely measure the amount of time it took you to read individual words. This method is called self-paced reading. We are particularly interested in how long it takes people to read words like "tattoo" in profiles that are either consistent with or inconsistent with common stereotypes, and we will analyze whether additional speaker-specific information has a statistically significant influence on those reading times.

As is usual in scientific experiments, we ask you not to discuss the details of this study or its overall purpose with anyone else until after its conclusion on July 30, 2016.

If you are interested in the results of this study, feel free to contact me at and I'll keep you posted!