

**Title:** The Face of Fear: Implicit Associations Between Stereotypical Face Type and Perception of Threat

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**Introduction:**

There has been a great deal of research into the explicit association between Black Americans and perceptions of violence. Even within race, however, there is a correlation between stereotypically black facial features (a.k.a. Africentric features) and perception of violence or threat. This affects many key decisions in law enforcement, courtrooms, eyewitness identification, and voting.

**Purpose:**

The study will use the Implicit Association Test to investigate implicit associations between perception of threat and stereotypically Black facial features.

**Methods:**

An Implicit Association Test gauges the degree of association between two categories (in this case, stereotypicality of features and threat). Participants will sort images of non-face objects, and faces of Black and White individuals pre-rated for stereotypicality of features, into category pairings (e.g. “stereotypical” paired with “threatening” and “atypical” paired with “safe,” or vice-versa). Response latency comparisons between the stereotypical/threatening group and the stereotypical/safe group by each participant should reveal implicit bias associating threat with stereotypicality. Comparisons will be made using the IAT-D calculations, with exclusion criteria for outlier response time.

**Discussion**

Whether or not stereotypically Black facial features are associated with threat on an implicit level has particular implications for diversity and anti-bias training in law enforcement, juries, judges, educational officials, and employers. If individuals are only taught to suppress explicit (conscious) bias, they may remain unaware of implicit biases that may still affect their behavior and decisions. In a situation requiring fast reactions to perceived threat (e.g. “shoot/don’t shoot” decisions by law enforcement) individuals rely heavily on implicit biases and heuristics to guide their decision to act.