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THE PERCEPTION OF LINGUISTIC BIAS IN NEWS MEDIA

Linguistic bias refers to the differential use of linguistic abstraction to describe the same behaviour for members of different groups. Although research has demonstrated that linguistic bias is widely used, few studies have looked at the consequences of exposure to such bias. This study investigated the impact of exposure to a contrived news report about a sexual assault. 65 participants were exposed to one of four versions of the news report that varied by concrete or abstract language and a white or black male suspect. Preliminary results suggest that participants were largely unaware of linguistic bias and that there is an interaction between the group membership of the alleged perpetrator and the language used to describe the crime on perception of the news report as biased. Results will be discussed in terms of important social implications, such as the perpetuation of stereotypes through news media.

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