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## Gendered and Racialized Language Ideologies at SDSU

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### INTRODUCTION

As humans, we judge. We see the way somebody dresses, the foods they eat, the color of their skin, the job they have, and we employ this input to draw conclusions about who and how they are as people—despite only knowing this superficially observable information about them. This judgment occurs with language as well. Due to the different language ideologies that everybody holds, opinions emerge about people based on the way they say something or the language they use. This can occur between languages, between dialects of the same language and even within the same dialect of a language. In this paper, I explore the ways in which South Dakota State University students perceive speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in comparison to how they perceive speakers of Standard American English (SAE). In addition to focusing on the dialect spoken, I explore SDSU students' perceptions of male speakers in comparison to female speakers. I prove that SDSU students attribute more negative characteristics and less positive characteristics to AAVE speaking students, and I argue that this potentially affects the personal, educational, and professional experiences of AAVE speaking students at SDSU. I also prove that SDSU students perceive male speakers in a more negative light than they do female speakers, and I argue that this language ideology places females at a disadvantage in the professional world despite the positive perceptions they received.

#### *Language Ideologies*

Ahearn (2017) defines language ideologies as “the attitudes, beliefs, or theories that we all have about language” (p. 23). Based off of this definition, everybody, conscious of this or not, has their own personal ideas about language. Some people might think that English sounds better than Spanish, that British accents sound elegant, that Southern English and some of its features (like *y'all*) might make somebody sound unintelligent—whatever the ideologies are, everybody has them. Interestingly, language ideologies usually have little to do with actual linguistic differences. By that, I mean that we construct our attitudes toward language not based on the specific phonological or grammatical variations that we hear, but rather on the associations we make connecting such speech features to certain cultures, races, genders, etc. Determining that these associations do not pertain to the efficacy of a language, Lippi-Green (2012) argues that due to the flexibility and responsiveness of all languages, each language can express anything that it needs to by adapting when necessary, and therefore, all languages are equal (p. 8). Although some people might argue that possessing complex grammatical features and a wider range of vocabulary makes one language “better” than another, Lippi-Green suggests that language exists to communicate, and that each language has its own efficient way of doing so. This results in the fact that languages—even varieties of the same language—are all linguistically equal. If that is true, why do we have such strong opinions and beliefs about languages? Antonio Martínez (2013) takes our basic understanding of language ideologies a step further when he clarifies that there is an “*embeddedness* of language ideologies within broader social, cultural, historical, and political contexts” (p. 278). These social, cultural, historical and political associations that we make with linguistic features help create our attitudes towards certain languages and can, in part, stem from indexicality. Indexicality always functions on multiple levels. At a basic level, indexicality includes a language's ability to refer to or index the decontextualized message. This is the *referential function*: a linguistic sign (for example, a word or a phrase) directly points to the object or concept it represents (Ahearn, 2017, p. 28). For example, the word *car* refers to or indexes the object that has four wheels and serves as a means of transportation. However, on a more complex level of indexicality, Ahearn explains that “language can ‘point to’ something social or contextual without functioning in a referential way” (2017, p. 30) For example, regional variation of language can yield different dialects and index a speaker's origin. Taking this into consideration for the

previous example, pronouncing *car* without the final “r” sound might point to the speaker’s origin, suggesting they are from Boston, instead of solely referring to the object *car*. While using indexicality to discover the origin of the speaker, listeners may attach other social stereotypes to the speaker because of the way he or she speaks—perhaps they view this speaker as improper, aggressive, or from a lower class. However, the same linguistic feature, dropping the final “r” sound, is found in many dialects of English in England. If the speaker indexes an English origin, the listener might perceive him or her as proper, elegant, or well-off (Trudgill, 1983, p. 21). Despite both speakers exhibiting the same phonological feature, they become associated with strikingly different attributes. The different attributes linked to each speaker demonstrate how people communicate more than they think when they say something. With indexicality in mind, we create language ideologies by attaching personal attitudes—that stem from a social, cultural, historical or political contexts—to a person (or a group of people) based on the indexical features found in his or her speech patterns. Due to the nature of language ideologies, dominant ideas—the ideas widely accepted throughout a society, generally stemming from someone or something with power—always tend to surface, creating “standard” and “sub-standard” dialects.

### *African American Vernacular English vs Standard American English*

In order to successfully understand what African American Vernacular English is, I must explain Standard American English first. SAE is the variety of English that, to most people, seems “normal.” Kaplan University Writing Center (2011) suggests that “Standard American English is the language of books, news articles, and published discourse. It is the English you learn in school in grammar books and textbooks” (2011, p. 1) Most people think of this variety of English as the way in which everyone should speak if they want to speak correctly according to prescriptive grammar rules. Despite how commonplace this view is, this ideology only exists because of hegemonic ideologies rooted in social, political, and racial power relations. Wiley and Lukes (1996) explain that groups with power and authority can impose their variety of language as dominant and that this language gains superiority due to the power and authority of the dominant group (p. 514). This suggests that the inequality existing in language ideologies stems from social behavior and has nothing to do with linguistic differentiation—as mentioned above. Lippi-Green defines *standard language* as: “a bias toward an abstracted, idealized, homogeneous spoken language which is imposed from above, and which takes as its model the written language” (1994, p. 166). This idea of a standard language seems so natural to most people, and Lippi-Green notes the common features of SAE speakers as: having no regional accent, having a good education, strictly adhering to prescriptive grammar rules, and residing in the Midwest (2012, p. 60). Aggregating these various definitions, for this essay, I maintain that SAE is the language associated with sounding “proper,” using “correct” school-taught grammar, and having “no accent,” and that, due to its roots in the dominant and powerful group, SAE represents the language connected to social mobility, higher education, and success.

On the other hand, while the dominant society views SAE as normal, this is not the case with AAVE. By first looking at AAVE in comparison to SAE, Pullman (1999) states, “Most speakers of Standard English think that AAVE is just a badly spoken version of their language, marred by a lot of ignorant mistakes in grammar and pronunciation, or worse than that, an unimportant and mostly abusive repertoire of street slang” (p. 40). Many people may refer to AAVE as Black *slang*, but AAVE is a *dialect* of English. As a dialect of English, scholars note that AAVE possesses a consistent, rule-governed system of phonology, morphology, and syntax (Pullman, 1999; Rickford, 1999; Ahearn, 2017). Ahearn reviews some of the most common features as: the habitual *be*, copula deletion, negative concord, and reduction of final consonants (2017, pp. 237-242), all of which I discuss below.

The habitual *be* “indicates habitual behavior or a usual state of being” (Ahearn, 2017, p. 238). For example, *he be working* would not mean that he *is* working (present progressive), but rather that he works often and has been for a long time (habitual action). This grammatical function does not exist neatly in one verb in SAE.

Ahearn defines copula deletion as the “omission of the conjugated form of ‘to be’ and that, much like contractions in SAE, copula deletion adheres to strict rules” (2017, p. 239). For example, instead of saying *she is over there* or *she’s over there*, someone who speaks AAVE might say *she over there*. However, in a situation where a contraction cannot be used, copula deletion will not appear either. If one were to say *that’s where she is*, a SAE speaker could not say *that’s where she’s*, just like a speaker of AAVE could not say *that’s where she*. It may look or sound wrong in SAE, but copula deletion is just as grammatically correct in AAVE as contractions are in SAE.

Negative concord refers to the use of two, or more, negatives in the same sentence. While in SAE, grammar rules would state that the negatives cancel out, in AAVE, the negatives reinforce each other and are obligatory. For example, a speaker of AAVE could say *I can’t get nothing from nobody*, and this would translate into SAE as *I can’t get anything from anybody*. The required use of negative concord is a common feature in other “standard” languages. For example, in Spanish, one would have to say *no quiero nada*, which directly translates to *I don’t want nothing*. Although it seems like a mistake in SAE, negative concord is purposeful and grammatically correct in AAVE.

Unlike the previous three grammatical features, the last AAVE feature reviewed in this essay deals with phonological variation. The reduction of final consonants obeys certain rules just like the other features. To understand how this rule works, Ahearn explains that English stop consonants include *p*, *t*, *k*, *b*, *d*, and *g*, and she goes on to explain that *p*, *t*, and *k* are voiceless (no vibration in the vocal chords), while *b*, *d*, and *g* are voiced (2017, p. 241). Pullman describes the rule by saying, “A stop consonant at the end of a word may be omitted (and usually is) if it is preceded by another consonant of the same voicing” (1999, p. 51). A word like *dump* would not experience reduction of final consonants because *m* is voiced while *p* is voiceless. However, an AAVE speaker might pronounce a word like *west* as *wes*, because *s* and *t* are both voiceless. Overall, these linguistic features found in AAVE offer a basic understanding that AAVE is, in fact, a dialect (not slang), and that it is just as complicated and rule-based as any other language or dialect.

## METHODS

### *Research Questions*

Understanding the relationship between language ideologies, SAE, and AAVE sparks a curiosity as to how this all plays out in daily interaction. Out of the many public spheres that promote SAE as the only proper language, higher education stands out in comparison to others. The educational world relies on this concept of standard language superiority in order to teach students how to speak and write correctly (according to SAE prescriptive grammar rules). As such, the nature of this environment suggested that a college campus would be a great site for research. The main research question that guided this study was: How do SDSU students perceive AAVE in comparison to SAE? Before conducting the study, I proposed three hypotheses rooting back to this question. I based the hypotheses off beliefs that stem from common racial stereotypes in the U.S. and from the ideology that SAE is linked to social mobility and higher education.

- 1: SDSU students will perceive AAVE speakers as less personally appealing than SAE speakers.
- 2: SDSU students will perceive AAVE speakers as less socially correct than SAE speakers.
- 3: SDSU students will perceive AAVE speakers as less capable than SAE speakers.

The second research question was: How do SDSU students perceive female speakers in comparison to male speakers. I proposed three hypotheses for this question as well. I based these hypotheses off prescriptive gender stereotypes in the U.S.

- 1: SDSU students will perceive female speakers as more personally appealing than male speakers.
- 2: SDSU students will perceive female speakers as more socially correct than male speakers.
- 3: SDSU students will perceive female speakers as less capable than male speakers.

This study received SDSU Human Subjects Committee approval on 02/16/17 (IRB-1702021-EXM), the institutional equivalent to the federally mandated Institutional Review Board (IRB).

*Matched-Guise Test*

For my study, I chose to use a matched-guise test, a method that Loureiro-Rodriguez, Boggess, and Goldsmith (2012) summarize as a means to study language ideologies in which multiple speakers record the same passage in two or more linguistic varieties. Following this, other participants listen to the recording and rate the voice (or *guise*), unaware that each speaker has produced two recordings (p. 6).

For my own study there were 34 participants total, all who completed a short questionnaire in order to obtain the participant’s age, gender, and ethnic origin/race. This questionnaire is located in Appendix A. Out of these 34 participants, I recorded four speakers who were capable of code-switching from the dialect of SAE to the dialect of AAVE. Therefore, they recited the same passage twice—once in each dialect—resulting in eight total recordings. I recorded the following speakers:

Speaker	Race	Gender	Recordings
M1	African American	Male	M1-SAE M1-AAVE
M2	African American	Male	M2-SAE M2-AAVE
F1	African American	Female	F1-SAE F1-AAVE
F2	African American/White	Female	F2-SAE F2-AAVE

Table 1: Speaker Information

The remaining 30 participants were told that they would hear eight different people speaking over a series of recordings. They then filled out a qualitative survey for each recording they heard. This survey is also located in Appendix A. I played the recordings in the same order for each listener, and I organized them in a fashion to keep the same speaker’s two recordings at a maximum distance. After hearing each speaker, the listener agreed or disagreed with ten statements (based on my hypotheses) on a scale of one to five (one meaning that they strongly disagree, five meaning that they strongly agree). The statements were as follows:

- This speaker sounds: 1) intelligent, 2) outgoing, 3) successful, 4) nice, 5) aggressive,
- 6) intimidating, 7) attractive, 8) professional, 9) improper, and 10) vulgar

Based on the structuring of adjectives found in the methodology from the work of Loureiro-Rodriguez et al. (2012), I organized the adjectives to relate to personal appeal, capability, and social correctness—aligning with my hypotheses to determine the listeners’ language ideologies toward each of the speakers and his or her guise. The adjectives *outgoing*, *nice*, *aggressive*, *intimidating*, and *attractive* align with personal appeal. These descriptions relate to common characteristics used to determine somebody’s personality as favorable or not. The adjectives *intelligent*, *successful*, and *professional* align with capability; these adjectives relate to efficacy in school or work. Finally, the

adjectives *improper* and *vulgar* align with social correctness, referring to what society views as acceptable or not.

In order to solely explore the effects that dialect and gender have on speech perception, I recorded the speakers reading from the same pre-written script (this script can be found in Appendix B). With this controlled situation, the listener’s answers could not be affected by the referential meaning of the message content; each speaker communicated the same message. In order to allow for the appearance of grammatical features of AAVE, I allowed and encouraged the speakers to make changes to the script beyond just the phonological level, as long as the referential function of the message remained unchanged. This control imposed over message content allowed me to observe the effects of the language itself. If the listeners rate the same speaker differently for each different guise, I can confidently attribute that difference to the dialect used or the gender of the speaker and not the referential meaning of the message.

## RESULTS

### *Descriptive Statistics*

Out of the 30 listeners, 15 were male and 15 were female. Out of the males, ten were White, three were African American, and two were Middle Eastern. Out of the females, 14 were White, while one was Hispanic/Latina.

### *Statistics by Adjective*

In order to confirm or contradict my hypotheses, I calculated the means to obtain an average AAVE rating and average SAE rating for each of the ten adjectives. I then conducted a paired t-test to find the statistical significance of the results. The results from the study confirmed all three of my hypotheses—presenting data that favored SAE speakers for each adjective. These results show ratings of each adjective on a scale of one to five, with one being the least and five being the most. The complete data set can be found in the South Dakota State University public access institutional repository, Open PRAIRIE.

Adjective:	Mean (SAE)	Mean (AAVE)	T-test
Intelligent	3.55	2.31	p<0.0001
Outgoing	3.32	3.34	p=0.3679
Successful	3.43	2.52	p<0.0001
Nice	3.72	2.94	p<0.0001
Aggressive	1.87	2.90	p<0.0001
Intimidating	1.85	2.53	p<0.0001
Attractive	2.82	2.53	p=0.0098
Professional	3.23	1.86	p<0.0001
Improper	2.01	3.42	p<0.0001
Vulgar	1.56	2.80	p<0.0001

Table 2: Average Ratings According to Dialect

The results confirm that SDSU students perceive AAVE speakers to be less *intelligent, successful, nice, attractive, and professional* than SAE speakers. The t-test proved that these results were all extremely significant.

The results also confirm that SDSU students perceive AAVE speakers to be more *outgoing, aggressive, intimidating, improper, and vulgar*. With the exception of *outgoing*, the t-test proved that these results were all extremely significant.

Using the same statistical analysis, the data revealed significant results for nine of the ten adjectives based on gendered perceptions. After calculating the averages for the male recordings and the averages for the female recordings, the results show a more positive perception of female speakers.

Adjective:	Mean (Male)	Mean (Female)	T-test
Intelligent	2.79	3.07	p=0.0092
Outgoing	3.39	3.36	p=0.8030
Successful	2.87	3.08	p<0.0442
Nice	3.31	3.53	p<0.0012
Aggressive	2.63	2.13	p<0.0001
Intimidating	2.54	1.84	p<0.0001
Attractive	2.57	2.78	p=0.0356
Professional	2.28	2.80	p<0.0001
Improper	3.06	2.35	p<0.0001
Vulgar	2.56	1.80	p<0.0001

Table 3: Average Ratings According to Gender

The results confirm that SDSU students perceive female speakers to be more *intelligent, successful, nice, attractive, and professional* than male speakers. The t-test proved that these results were all significant.

The results also confirm that SDSU students perceive female speakers to be less *outgoing, aggressive, intimidating, improper, and vulgar*. With the exception of *outgoing*, the t-test proved that these results were all significant.

## DISCUSSION

### *Racialized Perceptions*

The adjectives *outgoing, nice, aggressive, intimidating, and attractive* align with personal appeal, and all of these, except for *outgoing*, yielded significant results. Overall, SDSU students found SAE speakers more socially appealing than AAVE speakers. The listeners perceived SAE speakers as significantly nicer and more attractive, while they viewed the AAVE speakers as significantly more aggressive and intimidating. The important thing to remember is that both the SAE speakers and the AAVE speakers are the *same* people. How can the same person be viewed as significantly nicer than *themselves* when they communicated the *same message*? Lippi-Green suggests, “the

evaluation of language effectiveness can sometimes serve as a way of judging not the message, but the social identity of the messenger” (2012, p. 15). In this sense, the listeners strictly relied on the voice and dialect of the speaker—nothing else mattered. We, as humans, trust our instincts of others’ personalities to help us decide who we would like to have as our friends. If SDSU students make these judgments based on their own language ideologies and the way people speak, our campus surely cannot exude welcoming and inclusive feelings toward speakers of AAVE, and perhaps other “substandard” dialects. All of the participants are students at SDSU. They interact with fellow students every day on the SDSU campus. If one of the listeners met one of the speakers they would likely judge them in the same way they did in this study, maybe even leading them to think that this speaker is too intimidating and aggressive to be friends with or to sit by in class, etc. Not only do the perceptions affect the social lives and acceptance of AAVE speakers, but also the ideologies held toward them have the capability of limiting their opportunities in an academic and professional setting.

The adjectives *improper* and *vulgar* align with social correctness. Overall, SDSU students found SAE speakers as more socially correct than AAVE speakers. For sounding improper and vulgar, listeners rated the AAVE speakers as significantly higher in both categories. Only one speaker chose to use profanity in their AAVE recording and all speakers communicated the same, seemingly appropriate message about an upcoming test. So why did they all receive such high scores as improper and vulgar speakers? Lippi-Green (1994) explains how the majority of people think of language use in two spheres: “When asked directly about language use, most people will draw a very solid basic distinction of ‘standard’ (proper, correct) English vs. everything else” (p. 5). With this in mind and based off of the results, on average, SDSU students think of SAE as the proper way to speak and AAVE as improper simply because it is not SAE and follows different grammatical rules. Just like in the last two categories, personal appeal and capability, the idea that AAVE speakers are improper and vulgar will affect how SDSU’s White-dominant social environment will accept them. Until more people understand that AAVE is not SAE with grammatical errors, it will continue to be seen as improper.

The adjectives *intelligent*, *successful*, and *professional* align with capability. Overall, SDSU students found SAE speakers more capable than AAVE speakers. The listeners assessed the AAVE speakers as drastically less intelligent, successful, and professional—all attributes found to be essential characteristics in education and work. Wiley and Lukes (1996) explain some crucial information when it comes to standard language ideologies:

Once standards for expected linguistic behavior have been imposed, privileged varieties of language become a kind of social capital facilitating access to education, good grades, competitive test scores, employment, public office, and economic advantages for those who have mastered the standard language. (p. 515)

The “expected linguistic behavior” of SAE automatically correlates with success in school, careers, and in life overall, so the results do not seem surprising that SDSU students perceived the SAE speakers as more *intelligent*, *successful*, and *professional*. This turns into a problem when looking at the other side of things—SDSU students perceive AAVE speakers as significantly less capable than SAE speakers. What happens to AAVE-speaking students’ opportunities in an educational setting? Or when they start looking for a job? Although viewed as less *intelligent*, less *successful*, and less *professional*, the voices and dialects of these AAVE speakers reveal nothing about their work ethic, their GPA, their jobs, the awards or honors they hold, or anything else related to capability for that matter. Indeed, these speakers were able to completely code-switch and function as proficient speakers of SAE, a fact that underscores that AAVE is not linked to these attributes. Therefore, the arbitrary associations and stereotypes, tied to languages and that deem SAE as the language of success, need some revision. The Policy and Procedural Manual for SDSU states under policy 1:19:

The University offers *equal opportunities in employment and for access to and participation in education*, extension, and other services at the University to all persons... *without discrimination* based on sex, race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, gender, gender identification, transgender, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, or any other status that may become protected under law against discrimination. (South Dakota State University Office of Resources, 2014, emphasis added)



It may seem that equal opportunity is granted to all at SDSU, but the perceptions held against AAVE speakers suggest that this may not be the case. Language does not appear on the list of statuses protected by the law, but race does. Because SDSU students judge others on the language they speak, and these language ideologies are based on social, political, and *racial* stereotypes, it is fair to assume that AAVE-speaking students are being perceived as less *intelligent* in a discriminatory fashion. This may lead to discrimination in the classroom or in the professional world. In order to ensure that all students at SDSU have an equal opportunity to educational and professional mobility, we must start to look at languages for their linguistic value, and not the social status they hold in our hegemonic world.

### *Gendered Perceptions*

Regardless of dialect, SDSU students perceive male speakers to be less *intelligent*, *successful*, *nice*, *attractive*, and *professional* than female speakers, while they also perceive them to be more *outgoing*, *aggressive*, *intimidating*, *improper*, and *vulgar*. All of these, except for *outgoing*, yielded significant results. Overall, this shows that SDSU students found female speakers more personally appealing, socially correct, and capable than male speakers, confirming my first and second hypotheses while rejecting my third. Although it seems that this should place the males at a disadvantage in the personal, educational, and professional world (as I suggested for the AAVE speakers), I argue that this actually leads to hindrances for women in the workplace.

Although the males and females all read from the same pre-written script, they received significantly different ratings for each of the ten adjectives. This may result from the prescriptive stereotypes in circulation for men and women. Heilman states, “Key to the assertion that gender stereotypes and the biased evaluations they produce inhibit women from progressing upward to the top of organizations are the stereotyped conceptions of what women are like and how they should behave” (2001, p. 658). She goes on to explain that “men are characterized as aggressive, forceful, independent, and decisive, whereas women are characterized as kind, helpful, sympathetic, and concerned about others” (2001, p. 658). With this in mind, some of the results from the study seem to follow these stereotypes. Whether the speaker used the dialect of SAE or AAVE, SDSU students viewed male speakers as more *aggressive* and *intimidating*, and they perceived female speakers as *nicer*—these adjectives align with some of the prescriptive stereotypes that Heilman mentions. Many of the others adjectives from the study seem to fall into a category similar to the stereotypes discussed in Heilman’s article as well. Due to the female recordings’ high evaluations in all three categories, I suggest that they experience positive receptions in the personal and academic world.

I argue that being seen as nice and not intimidating will most likely contribute to positive social interactions, while being seen as intelligent and not as improper will most likely contribute to a positive educational experience. Therefore, it seems peculiar that these positive prescriptive stereotypes and gendered perceptions lead women to be less successful in the professional world. Heilman maintains that these stereotypes can prevent women from advancing in the professional world because:

Top management and executive level jobs are almost always considered to be “male” in sex-type. They are thought to require an achievement oriented *aggressiveness* and an emotional *toughness* that is distinctly male in character...The perceived lack of fit between the requirements of traditionally male jobs and the stereotypic attributes ascribed to women is therefore likely to produce expectations of failure. (pp. 659-660, emphasis added)

The female speakers at SDSU may seem more personally appealing, capable, and socially correct than their male counterparts and might excel in their personal and academic lives, but due to their lack of being perceived as *aggressive* and *intimidating* and their positive ratings for being *nice* and *attractive*, they might be viewed as just a nice, pretty face that does not have what it takes to make it in the workplace. To start giving females an equal opportunity in the professional world, we need to start valuing women for their competency and the quality of their work instead of devaluing them based solely off the prescriptive gender stereotypes. The gendered perceptions in this study reveal that the listeners might not have reacted to the actual speech of each recording, but, instead, reacted to the gender of the speaker and assigned the

stereotypical attributes based on gender. No matter how the perceptions play out in the personal, educational, or professional world for either gender, this study clearly shows how gender stereotypes (for males and females) have influence over language ideologies.

## CONCLUSION

Moving beyond the campus at SDSU, these results can highlight the fact that everyone possesses language ideologies—functioning on a conscious or subconscious level—that have little to do with language. These language ideologies stem from stereotypes, which result in the listeners' perceptions being shaped by prescriptive norms rather than actual linguistic features. The stereotyping and discrimination found in this study open up the discussion of racism. Although not everyone is *overtly* racist, overall, instances of *covert* racism emerge when taking a closer look at language ideologies. *Overt racism* is intentional, conscious, and often explicit, while *covert racism* is subtle and disguised (Coates, 2008, p. 208). Although somebody might not explicitly say *They sound less intelligent because they are Black*, by passing this judgment of sounding less intelligent onto speakers of AAVE, they reveal the covert racism that exists and shapes our language ideologies.

Although female students on the campus at SDSU might seem to be treated fairly due to the positive evaluations they received, when they graduate and move on to look for careers they might very well struggle because of these same qualities SDSU students perceived them to have. According to Bush, even though more women hold middle-managerial positions now than in past decades, women make up only 4.2 percent of CEOs at Fortune 500 companies (Bush, n.d.). This illustrates the very real fight women have trying to make it to the top. By correlating certain careers with prescriptive male stereotypes, we automatically make it significantly more difficult for any woman to outrank a man for virtually any job position. Although the qualities granted to women in this study seem positive, they reveal a type of sexism, according to Bush, called 'benevolent' sexism which "describes positive attitudes and actions which men take toward women that are based, deep-down, in feelings of superiority and dominance" (Bush, n.d.). In this case of gender, the preconceived gender ideologies of how men and women *should* be help to create and fortify the language ideologies regarding female and male speakers, leading to arbitrary evaluations of their speech.

This study shows how standard/substandard dialects, gender, indexicality, and dominant language ideologies all work together as a system, perpetuated through its constant and reinforced use. This system causes people to judge others' personalities, capabilities, and social correctness based on the way they speak and on the stereotypes stemming from social, cultural, historical and political power relations which, ultimately, leads to gender and racial inequality in the personal, educational, and professional world.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE INVESTIGATION

While using the results from only 30 listeners, the small sample size might misrepresent the overall perceptions at SDSU. With more participants, the accuracy of the perceptions could increase, which might reveal more significant disparities between dialects and gender or a more neutral opinion. Not only could the sample size be larger, but also a more diverse group of listeners could make this study more accurate. Only six out of the 30 listeners identified themselves with a race/ethnicity that was not White. Therefore, this study presents the results based on a majority of White students' language ideologies. Finally, when it comes to drawing conclusions from the results, my own personal bias exists as a limitation to this study. Although using other sources to support my thoughts, being a White female, the conclusions that I draw reflect my own ideologies.

Due to the lack of ethnic/racial diversity in the sample size of listening participants, examining how the listener's ethnicity/race might affect the perception of AAVE could not be realized in this study, therefore, collecting data from new listeners of more diverse backgrounds could constitute a possible future study, or extension of this study. Analyzing how the listener's gender might affect speech perception could also

be a future study. Instead of looking at only the gender of the speaker, this study might analyze how the male listeners and female listeners have different perceptions of the various recordings. Further studies could also include adding more speakers with different varieties of English to determine how SDSU students would perceive other “substandard” dialects in comparison to SAE. Following the methodology from Antonio Martínez (2013), another future study could incorporate participant retrospective interviews with students to ask them explicitly about language use (their own and others’) in order to uncover their language ideologies in a different way than done here.

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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire for All Participants

Age:

Gender: (*circle one*)

Male      Female      Other: \_\_\_\_\_      Prefer not to answer

Ethnic Origin or Race: (*circle one or more*)

White

Hispanic or Latino/a

Black or African American

Native American/Alaska Native

Asian/Pacific Islander

Other: \_\_\_\_\_      Prefer not to answer

### Survey for Listeners

Mark to what degree you agree or disagree with each statement below—indicate your answer by circling one answer per statement.

1=strongly disagree    2=disagree    3=neutral/no opinion    4=agree    5=strongly agree

- |     |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  | This speaker sounds <b>intelligent</b> .  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2.  | This speaker sounds <b>outgoing</b> .     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3.  | This speaker sounds <b>successful</b> .   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4.  | This speaker sounds <b>nice</b> .         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5.  | This speaker sounds <b>aggressive</b> .   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6.  | This speaker sounds <b>intimidating</b> . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7.  | This speaker sounds <b>attractive</b> .   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8.  | This speaker sounds <b>professional</b> . | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9.  | This speaker sounds <b>improper</b> .     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | This speaker sounds <b>vulgar</b> .       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## APPENDIX B

### Script for the speakers

Hey! We're going to be studying later if you want to join. We have that test coming up for Ms. Smith's class. She is mean when it comes to grading. Hopefully this isn't going to be too hard, but I don't know.