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Judgement of political statements are influenced by speaker identity

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Abstract

Analyses of political discourse typically focus on the semantic content of politicians' statements. The approach treats the meaning of a speaker's words as independent from the speaker's identity itself; however, there are reasons to believe that one might influence the other. Features of a speaker's identity influence others' judgements of their character (e.g., Kinzler & DeJesus, 2013), and thus speaker identity could influence listeners' assessment of the semantics and validity of the statements themselves. Here, we collect U.S. participants' judgements of the political orientation of different statements, from liberal to conservative, heard with one of three accents, a generic U.S. accent, a Southern U.S. accent or an Australian accent. In comparison to identical statements conveyed in the generic U.S. accent, participants tended to perceive the U.S. Southern accented statements as more conservative and the Australian accented statements as more liberal.