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Loralee Geiger
Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne

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Gender Differences in Feelings of Personal Safety and Implicit Associations of Night and Danger
Loralee Geiger
Carol Lawton
Psychology
Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne

The purpose of this study was to examine gender differences in feelings of personal safety and whether they could be measured using the Implicit Association Test. The sample consisted of 423 (150 male and 273 female) undergraduate students. Participants completed an Implicit Association Test (IAT), which was presented on a computer. They were required to categorize pictures of day scenes and night scenes and words related to safety and danger into the superordinate categories of Day/Unafraid versus Night/Afraid (Consistent condition) and Day/Afraid versus Night/Unafraid (Inconsistent condition). Subsequently, participants answered questions regarding feelings of safety. As was expected, women reported feeling significantly less safe than did men. There was a significant difference in response times in the IAT between Consistent and Inconsistent conditions, with both women and men responding faster in the Consistent condition than in the Inconsistent condition. Response times for women in the IAT were greater between the two conditions than they were for men, which shows that women have a stronger association with danger and night than do men; the implicit and explicit measures were not found to be correlated.