The Selective Negative Priming Effect: Return to an Inhibition Account

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Previous studies found that negative priming (NP) depends on the presence of a conflict in the probe. We studied NP by manipulating probe conflict with minimal similarity between prime and probe. In every trial participants focused on a colored figure and named the color of the following Stroop probe. NP occurred only when the probe contained distracting information (i.e., the incongruent Stroop condition). These results do not fit explanations based on prime–probe similarity, but support accounts involving inhibition as essential to NP. We believe that the inhibition activated during prime processing appears in the probe only when it involves control processes.