

Jazmine Barnes Case Shows How Trauma Can Affect Memory

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Imagine being held up at gunpoint. Do you trust you could remember the perpetrator's face? The gun? Or would you have a better recollection of how loud the birds were chirping at that moment?

“The memory does not operate like a videotape machine faithfully recording every single detail,” said [Richard J. McNally, a professor of psychology at Harvard University and the author of “Remembering Trauma.”](#)

“The thing that is happening is that you're focusing on the most dangerous thing,” he said. “That is the function of fear: to alert you to imminent threats.”

Stress can play a role in eyewitness cases of mistaken identity, experts said, and it could be a reason there were such conflicting accounts of the suspects in the shooting death of [Jazmine Barnes](#), the 7-year-old Texas girl who was fired upon in a car with her mother and three sisters on Dec. 30.