

New Research From Psychological Science

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[Controlling the Unconscious: Attentional Task Sets Modulate Subliminal Semantic and Visuomotor Processes Differentially](#)

Ulla Martens, Ulrich Ansorge, and Markus Kiefer

Unconscious processing can be affected by how a person's attention is focused. Researchers gave volunteers a semantic induction task (i.e., classifying an object as living or nonliving) or a perceptual induction task (i.e., classifying an object as round or elongated) to engage their attention in different ways. Then, the volunteers were shown a subliminal prime (such as a real word appearing briefly between sets of random letters), followed by a target stimulus to see how the unconsciously processed prime affected their processing of the target after the different induction tasks. The results showed that the conscious processing activated by the induction tasks influenced the effect of the unconsciously perceived prime.

[Individual Differences in Recovery Time From Attentional Capture](#)

Keisuke Fukuda and Edward K. Vogel

Differences in working memory (WM) capacity have been attributed to a person's ability to control their attention, and low-WM-capacity individuals are thought to be more prone to have their attention captured by distractors. To test an alternative theory—that high-capacity individuals simply recover more quickly from distraction—two experiments using psychophysical and electrophysiological methods were carried out to test the susceptibility and recovery times of participants to attention capture. Evidence was found that high- and low-capacity individuals had their attention captured equally by a distractor, but high-capacity individuals returned their attention to the target more quickly than did low-capacity individuals.