

New Research From Psychological Science

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[The Use of Definite References Signals Declarative Memory: Evidence From Patients With Hippocampal Amnesia](#)

Melissa C. Duff, Rupa Gupta, Julie A. Hengst, Daniel Tranel, and Neal J. Cohen

Most people will use declarative references to save time and mental resources when they are having a conversation. For example, a person might say “the game” instead of “a game” if they know the other person is aware of what they are talking about. To test whether declarative memory was required for the use of definite references, patients with hippocampal amnesia were asked to complete a communication task with a partner they were familiar with. Compared with partnerships in which neither individual had amnesia, the amnesic pairs used fewer definite references. These results suggest that the use of definite references depends on declarative memory and that the idea of common ground may be more complex than it is thought to be.

[Read-Out of Emotional Information From Iconic Memory: The Longevity of Threatening Stimuli](#)

Christof Kuhbandner, Bernhard Spitzer, and Reinhard Pekrun

Stimuli that evoke emotions—especially fear—are typically prioritized over other stimuli. In the visual system, iconic memory is the memory system that manages primary sensations from the environment. In an experiment to see whether emotional stimuli are distinguished from other stimuli in iconic memory, volunteers were asked to report on target stimuli that were designed to evoke positive, fearful, or neutral emotions. The neutral and emotional stimuli were equally likely to enter iconic memory, but the decay of fear-provoking stimuli from this memory system was slower. Because the fear stimuli had a prolonged duration in iconic memory, the results indicate that the emotional significance of stimuli can be determined at the level of iconic memory.

[Calibrating the Response to Health Warnings: Limiting Both Overreaction and Underreaction With Self-Affirmation](#)

Dale W. Griffin and Peter R. Harris

To make a health-warning message successful, there has to be balance between inducing unnecessary panic and convincing people to be concerned. Self-affirmation, or reflecting on personal values, has been previously shown to increase people’s sensitivity to persuasive messages. To test whether self-affirmation would lead individuals to accept a health message without unnecessary alarm, women of childbearing age were asked to write an essay about their personal values and then read a government-issued pamphlet on mercury in seafood. Women who wrote the essay about personal values and were frequent seafood consumers showed more concern about mercury than a control group who wrote about

a different topic, while infrequent seafood consumers showed less concern. Therefore, self-affirmation manipulations could possibly be used to manage responses to health warnings.