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The Perception of Reduced Reliability in an External Store Reduces Vulnerability to its Manipulation.

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Abstract

Offloading cognition to external stores is practiced ubiquitously in daily life (e.g., counting on fingers, writing lists), yet is a relatively new area of investigation within cognitive science. Previous experiments have assessed the benefits and downfalls, including participants' lowered memory for offloaded information that is no longer available (Gardony et al., 2013; Sparrow et al., 2011). In addition, when offloading, individuals appear susceptible to manipulations of their external store (Risko et al., 2019). We report a series of experiments investigating how the perceived reliability of an external store affects individuals' susceptibility to manipulation of that store. Consistent with previous research, results suggest that the majority of participants do not notice an item inserted into their external store. However, once cued to this event, individuals do become more likely to subsequently notice a manipulation of their external store. Implications of this research for our understanding of distributed memory systems will be discussed.