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Authors

Barsics, Catherine
Bredart, Serge

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Retrieving episodic memories when recognizing familiar faces and names.

Catherine Barsics

Departement of Cognitive Sciences, University of Liège, Belgium.

Serge Brédart

Department of Cognitive Sciences, University of Liège, Belgium.

Abstract: This study was aimed at investigating whether the recognition of familiar faces is more likely to be associated with an experience of Remembering than the recognition of familiar names.

Using the Remember/Know paradigm the proportions of episodic memories recalled following the recognition of famous faces and names (Conditions) were assessed. Presented faces and names were previously judged by an independent group of participants as eliciting an equivalent level of familiarity. Nevertheless significant differences between the two conditions appeared in hit and false alarm rates. However, present results showed no significant difference in the recollection of personal memories (Remember responses conditionalized on the hits), following familiar faces compared with familiar names recognition.

This finding contrasts with recent accounts assuming that faces are more prone to yield episodic memories than other cues to person identity. These results and their implications for current Interactive Activation and Competition person recognition models are discussed.