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Source Memory

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Synonyms

[Contextual memory](#)

Definition

Can be thought of as a form of incidental memory and involves memory misattribution. Source memory refers to recalling the source of learned information, such as knowledge of when or where something was learned. Often, memories are triggered by contextual information (i.e., time and place). Source memory failure may be associated with old age, stress, distractibility, or intoxication and is a phenomenon in which a person retrieves fragments of a memory without remembering how or when the fragment was acquired. Source memory impairments have been shown to be

disproportionately impaired in patients with frontal lobe lesions. For instance, when asked to learn two separate lists of items, frontal lobe patients are impaired at determining if a word was on the first or second list (i.e., source), and not on the actual recall or recognition of the items. In contrast, medial temporal amnesics are impaired in recall of the actual items but not its source (e.g., first or second list).

Cross-References

- [Incidental Memory](#)
- [Memory](#)
- [Memory Impairment](#)

References and Readings

- Baldo, J. V., & Shimamura, A. P. (2002). Frontal lobes and memory. In A. D. Baddeley, M. D. Kopelman, & B. A. Wilson (Eds.), *The handbook of memory disorders* (2nd ed.). London: Wiley.
- Kolb, B., & Whishaw, I. Q. (2008). *Fundamentals of human neuropsychology*.