References

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Notes

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2. Now at Center for Research in Language and Language Behavior, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Comment on Rosenberg's Reply to Lachman, Dumas, and Guzy by Roy Lachman

The complexity of natural language is such that when a variable is experimentally manipulated in the context of syntactic discourse, other variables are almost inevitably manipulated concomitantly. Thus, when Rosenberg inserted normatively high association words into an English paragraph, he modified the phrase content and very likely changed the transitional probabilities of the phrases in that paragraph.

An ideal design would involve orthogonal variation of word association level and natural language frequency of phrases in connected discourse. Since phrase frequencies are presently unavailable, Lachman, Dumas, and Guzy randomized the order of context words and thereby destroyed the phrase structure along with all syntax. The Lachman et al results demonstrate that word association and syntactical context *interact* to enhance recall, most likely because under these joint

conditions the paragraph is loaded with high frequency phrases, clichés.

Rosenberg, in his reply, makes two main points. His first one is that the control groups were inappropriate as Ss had only 63 sec. to learn 149 unordered words. In point of fact, 63 sec. was sufficient for the high association control condition to show superior retention for all dependent variables employed except stimulus words (see Table 1 in Lachman et al). His final point was that Lachman et al failed to find a significant main effect for recall of stimulus words and "the reliability of this finding is questionable." It is indeed questionable for, as Table 1 in Lachman et al shows, there is a reversal in the recall of stimulus words between the syntactical and nonsyntactical condition. The nonsignificant main effect, thus, is due to a very strong interaction.