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Title: **Definites Lacking Uniqueness and Familiarity**

Date: Monday, September 17, 2005  
Time: 4:00pm  
Place: Rosenfeld Hall

**Abstract:**

The two most common means of analyzing definite NP meanings are notions of uniqueness, and familiarity. Both approaches have their well-known challenges. In this talk, I present a class of definite noun phrases which appear at first sight to constitute extraordinarily difficult counterexamples—so difficult, in fact, I argue that they are counterexamples only on a misanalysis of their semantics, and on an adequate analysis of their meaning they are no longer problematic. These are examples like (1) and (2) on one very natural reading:

1. The accident victims were taken to the hospital
2. Maria heard a report on the radio.

The noun phrases are discussed in Carlson and Sussman (in press) and fairly similar to those discussed by Barker (to appear), though these are non-relational. They are lexically restricted and appear only in certain environments. However, they are truth-conditionally equivalent to simple existential indefinites, showing no effects of familiarity or uniqueness. We establish further that these are a separate class by providing a series of experimental results which establish that they are treated differently from more routine definites in processing. I argue in the end that when seen as a class of type-denoting, and not token-denoting NP's, though, that both familiarity and uniqueness become relevant again.