**1. Introduction**

- Discourse representations for referents vary in prominence
  - Subjects typically more prominent than objects [1,2,3]
  - Animates typically more prominent than inanimates [4,5,6]
- Notable properties of nominal possessives (e.g. Sam’s car):
  - Express a broad range of conceptual relations [7,8]
  - Occur frequently [9]
  - Express a broad range of conceptual relations [7,8]
- Discourse representations for referents vary in prominence
  - Subjects typically more prominent than objects [1,2,3]
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**2. Research questions**

- How are possessives represented on the discourse level?
  - Do different possession relations (as determined by possession animacy) affect representation in discourse?
  - Are different types of possessed entities more or less likely to be mentioned subsequently in the discourse? With what linguistic form?
- Can we find support for the Animacy Hypothesis, Possessive Hypothesis, or Interaction Hypothesis?

**3. Methods**

- Sentence continuation task to probe discourse representations
  - Measures discourse prominence of competing referents [3]
  - Continuation subject considered most prominent [2,3]
  - 2x2 design manipulating properties of direct object:
    - Animacy (human role nouns vs. alienable inanimates)
    - Possessed vs. indefinite

**4. Predictions**

- Animacy Hypothesis: animate objects mentioned more often than inanimates; animacy effect in possessives parallel to its effect in indefinites
- Possessive Hypothesis: possessed objects mentioned more than indefinites; possession affects animates and inanimates similarly
- Interaction Hypothesis: possessed animates mentioned especially often, in excess of independent animacy and possession effects

**5. Results**

- Animacy Hypothesis: animate objects more likely as subjects than indefinite objects to be mentioned in subject position of continuations (glomer, p<0.001; Fig. 1)
  - Expected advantage in prominence for animates
- Interaction of animacy and possession (A): possessed animates more likely as subjects than indefinite animates (p=0.04; simple effect, p=0.02; Fig. 1)
  - Similar interaction across entire continuation: more mentions of possessed animates (p<0.01; Fig. 2)
- Possessed animates are privileged in discourse in excess of simple animacy effect

**6. Discussion**

- The data support the Interaction Hypothesis: possessed animates are especially prominent in discourse, as measured by their likelihood of re-mention
  - This privileged status may relate to non-linguistic theories on the importance of interpersonal relationships [13,14,15]
- Animacy effects fit with previous work showing overall greater prominence for animates, but competition among multiple animates in discourse, even when distinguished by gender [19]
- Differences in givens between possessives and indefinites may mask main effect of possession but cannot explain interaction; suggests extra prominence for human relationships
References