



## The Results

In this experiment, Elizabeth Loftus & John Palmer (1974) found that although everyone watched the same accident films, the wording of the speed question significantly affected how they saw these same events. Compared to a mean of 34 mph in response to the *hit* question, the estimates were 32 mph in response to the *contacted* question and 41 mph in response to the *smashed* question. In fact, just the wording of the question completely altered the way students interpreted these events. When they were brought back one week later and asked if there was broken glass in the accident they had seen, one-third of those who initially were asked the *smashed* question said there was. In fact, there was not.

## What Does It All Mean?

More and more, psychologists who study the way people think and those interested in the way people communicate have come to realize that thought and language are seamlessly interconnected. In this section, we'll see that language is a tool we humans use for articulating concepts, solutions to problems, and other thoughts. But there's more to the story. As we'll see later in this chapter, the classic *hit-smash* study by Loftus and Palmer (1974) shows that the words we use to describe events can, to some extent, shape the way we think.