

Study: Kids less prone to false memories

A U.S. psychological study suggests children are less prone to experiencing false memories than are adults.

The finding by Cornell University psychologists Charles Brainerd and Valerie Reyna has implications for court testimony.

Previous studies have indicated false memories of events were found to decrease with age throughout childhood and adolescence. In other words, as people grow into adulthood, their memory accuracy improves.

But in the new research, Brainerd and Reyna discovered the incidence of false memory actually increases with age under certain circumstances. That suggests adults have less accurate memories than do children.

Brainerd and Reyna said the reasoning behind the phenomenon is straightforward: Because children lack a sophisticated ability to connect the meanings of words or events, as compared with adolescents and adults, they are buffered from making the semantic relation memory mistake.

The researchers said their finding might have significant implications for the credibility of child testimony.

The research is detailed in the May issue of Psychological Science.

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