

BRIEF SUMMARY

Aizpurua, A., & Koutstaal, W. (2010). Aging and flexible remembering: Contributions of conceptual span, fluid intelligence, and frontal functioning. *Psychology and Aging, 25*, 193–207.

Aging attenuates the capacity to adaptively and flexibly use episodic memory at different levels of specificity. Older and younger adults were tested in a picture recognition task that required them to make episodic memory decisions at an item-specific (verbatim) versus category-based (gist-based) level on randomly intermixed trials. Specificity modulation was assessed using a measure of the likelihood that participants retrieved verbatim information in order to reject test items that were categorically related to studied items under item-specific recognition instructions (recollection rejection). We found that this measure positively correlated with conceptual span (an index of short-term semantic memory) and with level of fluid intelligence in older and younger adults. However, when we simultaneously considered each of four possible contributors (age, conceptual span, fluid intelligence, and frontal function), the only significant predictor of recollection rejection was the composite fluid intelligence measure (assessed by the Culture Fair Intelligence Test [Cattell & Cattell, 1960] and the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale-Revised Block Design subtest [Wechsler, 1981]). These findings suggest that interventions that facilitate adaptive specificity modulation in episodic memory may enhance the flexibility of thinking, and vice versa, in both older and younger adults.

KEYWORDS: flexible remembering, conceptual span, fluid intelligence, memory, aging
