

BRIEF SUMMARY

Koutstaal, W., Reddy, C., Jackson, E. M., Prince, S., Cendan, D. L., & Schacter, D. L. (2003). False recognition of abstract versus common objects in older and younger adults: Testing the semantic categorization account. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 29, 499–510.

Older adults often demonstrate higher levels of false recognition than do younger adults. However, in experiments using novel shapes without preexisting semantic representations, this age-related elevation in false recognition was found to be greatly attenuated. Two experiments tested a semantic categorization account of these findings. Do older adults show especially heightened false recognition if the stimuli have pre-existing semantic representations, such that semantic category information attenuates or truncates the encoding or retrieval of item-specific information? In Experiment 1, ambiguous shapes were presented with vs. without disambiguating semantic labels. Older adults showed higher false recognition when labels were present but not when labels were never presented. In Experiment 2, older adults showed higher false recognition for concrete but not abstract objects. The semantic categorization account was supported.
