

BRIEF SUMMARY

Koutstaal, W., & Schacter, D. L. (1997). Gist-based false recognition of pictures in older and younger adults. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 37, 555–583.

Three experiments examined the recognition performance of older (60-75 yrs) and younger (17-25 yrs) adults for detailed colored pictures of objects as a function of whether the targets and lures were from previously studied categories or were unrelated (noncategorized) items. If participants had studied many exemplars from a category, they often falsely recognized lures from those categories; this false recognition effect was especially pronounced in older adults. Older and younger participants showed equivalent correct recognition of large-category targets, but older adults showed significantly reduced recognition of unrelated targets, suggesting that older adults were relying on the general conceptual and/or perceptual similarity ("gist") of study and test items in making their recognition decisions. The results extend the domain of robust false recognition to detailed color pictures and demonstrate that, particularly in older adults, false recognition sometimes involves similarity-based errors rather than source confusions regarding whether specific lure items had been presented or were generated spontaneously during the study task.
