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Age-related Differences in Autobiographical Memory: A Trajectory of Changes

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Abstract

Age-related differences in autobiographical memory recall studies focused on the differences between young and elderly adults. Episodic details and phenomenological experiences in young and middle-aged adults were less studied. To obtain a trajectory, it is important to depict the changes in episodic and phenomenological details in middle-aged adults. The present study aimed to fill this gap by comparing young (ages 18 - 30 in Study 1, 20 - 30 in Study 2) and middle-aged (ages 30 - 60 in Study 1, 40 - 50 in Study 2) adults on early and recent memories. We collected data from 303 participants and asked questions about their phenomenological experiences. We coded episodic details based on the episodic richness scheme (Levine et al., 2002). We found that younger adults recollected more detailed memories than middle-aged adults. Also, young adults recollected events that were more important to their identity. Findings are discussed regarding retrieval/encoding-related advantages and their change across the lifespan.