

Kids need more time than adults give them, study finds

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Children playing. Photo credit: Wayne MacPhail

Further proof that children require more time comes via a study to be published today in *Developmental Science* asserting that the fast pace expected by adults - both parents and educators - can be beyond children's perceptual abilities.

"Children are increasingly being expected to provide an adult-level of detail and information," says David Shore, associate professor in McMaster University's Department of Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour. "Adults have had years to hone their perceptual skills; children - even 10 year olds - are just starting out."

The study is the first to probe so-called change blindness in children, a

hot topic in psychology circles especially when it pertains to gauging the veracity of children who are called upon to give eyewitness testimony in court.

The results surprised Shore.

"When it comes to many aspects of attention, an eight-year-old's skill is adult-like," says Shore. "But on this particular skill we never thought 10-year-olds would differ so dramatically from adults. Kids do not appear adult-like in this regard until their early teens."

Shore's study looked at the development of change detection in children ranging from ages six to 10 and found that, contrary to societal perception, even 10-year-olds cannot be relied upon to provide adult-like details. The reason is that children have undeveloped and, therefore, imprecise attention, he says. Their difficulties with eyewitness testimony may not stem from memory errors alone but may arise due to difficulty in perceiving some critical aspects of a scene in the first place.

"We expect children to be adult-like, because of their proficiency on computers or because they display adult-like speech," he says, "so we give them instructions and get impatient when they can't understand what we tell them the first time. Children learn through repetition, at a pace suitable to the child, not to the curriculum. Once upon a time, kids controlled their own pace; now that pace is controlled by adults."

Source: by Jane Christmas, McMaster University

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