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The Coexistence Theory: Support from an Activation-Based Memory Model

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Abstract: The misinformation effect is a well-established phenomenon in false memory literature, with debated explanations. The present study adopts an activation-based account of the misinformation effect in order to support the hypothesis that true and suggested information can coexist in memory. After exposure to misinformation, participants were primed with semantic associates of either the true or suggested item. Misled participants who were primed for the true item performed better on a final memory test than misled participants primed for neutral information. The results indicate that true and suggested information coexist, and retrieval is influenced by how activated each concept is at test. Implications for other theories within false memory research are discussed.