

Loftus's TED Talk a Standout Hit

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A talk by APS Past President Elizabeth Loftus, University of California, Irvine, has become an overnight sensation among TED viewers, garnering over 300,000 views in the first week it was available online.

In this talk, given at TEDGlobal 2013, Loftus explores the “fiction of memory,” illustrating the malleability of what we often consider to be a veridical record of our experiences. She shows how memory can be influenced, often in very subtle ways, and she highlights the real-life repercussions that false memories can have.

Loftus is a leading expert on memory — in particular, false memory. Over 40 years of research, Loftus has helped to overturn the concept of memory as a simple reconstruction of past events, revealing the extent to which people use new and existing information to fill in gaps in their recall of an event or experience.

Her research has had far-ranging implications for the legal system, demonstrating the unreliable nature of eyewitness testimony. Due to her unique expertise, Loftus has testified in 280 trials and consulted on many other cases.

Among the notable cases in which she has either testified or consulted include the McMartin preschool trial; the trials of Ted Bundy, O.J. Simpson, and Oliver North; and litigation involving Michael Jackson, Martha Stewart, and the Duke University Lacrosse team.