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### **When Children Lie: What Are They Thinking?**

*New Research Looks at How and Why Children Lie  
Does In-Utero Exposure to Alcohol Affect Lying?*

Research shows that a majority of children under 8 years of age will lie to conceal their transgressions. Lying is a highly demanding and deliberate act. It requires certain levels of sophistication. Most research in this area has examined preschool children's behavior about the initial lie, but has not examined children's ability to maintain their lies beyond the first lie.

Teachers and parents often place dishonesty at the top of their lists when ranking the seriousness of children's problem behaviors. That is one reason why it is important to understand child behavior when it comes to lying. It is also important to understand lying behavior if adults want to promote honesty among children.

A symposium during the Society for Research in Child Development will bring together four new studies with a focus on two important issues: children's lying behavior and its relation to their social-cognitive development; and the impact of different procedures for promoting truth-telling in children. Essentially, the symposium asks how does lying develop and how can we promote children's honesty?

Other questions that will be addressed by the symposium will be:

- What is the effect of age on lying behavior? Do kids become sophisticated liars with age?
- Are children who suffer from fetal alcohol syndrome more likely to lie than other children?
- What are children's perceptions of parental reactions about lying?
- What are the differences between kids who lie and kids who confess?

***Researchers: Victoria Talwar, McGill University, Montreal; Carmen Rasmussen, University of Alberta, Edmonton.***