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**False Memories and Ageing:
Source-Monitoring Interventions Reduce False Recognition in Both
Younger and Older Adults**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Clinical Psychology

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New Zealand

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Abstract

The purpose of the current research was to examine age-related differences in false recognition and attempt to establish whether these differences were best explained by the fuzzy-trace theory, source-monitoring processes (as part of the activation-monitoring theory), or sensitivity and/or criterion differences in signal detection ability. Eighty participants (40 younger adults, 16-30 years old, and 40 older adults, 75-80 years old) were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions. Twenty participants from each age group completed one of two versions of the Deese (1959) Roediger and McDermott (1995) false recognition task (DRM). The standard version required a simple old/new recognition judgement, while the source-monitoring version also required a source judgement. The results showed that older adults were sometimes, but not always, more prone to making false recognition errors compared to younger adults. Requiring source judgements decreased false recognition in both younger and older adults to a similar extent. Signal detection analyses showed that older adults were less sensitive than younger adults, and those in the source-monitoring condition were more conservative than those in the standard condition when making decisions about whether items were old. These and other results are discussed in terms of their implications and applications to real life false memories. As expected the results did not favour one theoretical perspective over another. Most of the results can be adequately explained by both the fuzzy-trace and activation-monitoring theory, although source-monitoring processes provided a simpler explanation of the research findings than fuzzy-trace theory or an appeal to bias and/or sensitivity differences.

This project was evaluated and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B (refer to Appendix A for approval letter).

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Table of Contents

Abstract	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
 Chapter One.....	 1
Introduction	1
Chapter Two	7
Literature Review Part One: False Memories.....	7
Cognitive Ageing	7
Source Memory	13
Source memory and ageing.	14
Proposed causes of age-related source memory deficits.....	16
The reduced memory hypothesis.....	17
The binding hypothesis.	18
Source decision/judgement processes.....	20
Memory Distortions and False Memories.....	21
Background	22
Age and false memories	24
Age and DRM false memories.....	25
Recall	25
Recognition.	26
Theories of False Memories	27
The Activation-Monitoring Theory	28
The activation mechanism.....	28
Ageing and the activation mechanism.	31
The source-monitoring mechanism.....	32
Ageing and the source-monitoring mechanism.	36

The Fuzzy-Trace Theory	37
Ageing and gist and verbatim memories.	39
Common Characteristics within the Two Theories	41
Chapter Three	46
Literature Review Part Two: Signal Detection Theory and False Memories.....	46
Signal Detection Theory	46
Age and signal detection estimates in recognition memory.	50
Signal Detection Models of False Recognition.....	51
The criterion-shift model.....	52
The storage-based model.....	53
Research into the two models.	55
DRM Research with Signal Detection Analyses	59
Signal detection analyses of item-specific and gist memory.	59
Signal detection analyses as supplementary analyses.....	62
Summary	64
Chapter Four	66
Method.....	66
Participants	66
Measures	67
The false recognition task	67
The Montreal Cognitive Assessment.....	71
Participant questionnaire	73
Apparatus	73
Procedure	74
Chapter Five	76
Results Part One: Recognition Accuracy.....	76
Initial Analyses.....	77
Outliers.	78
Normality.....	79
Recognition proportions.....	79
Certainty ratings.	79

Source-monitoring responses.	80
Homogeneity of variance.....	80
Correlations between dependent variables	81
Recognition proportions.	81
Source-monitoring responses.	81
The MoCA.....	82
Time testing took place.....	82
Adjusted Alpha Level	82
Memory Mistakes across Age and Recognition Test Conditions	84
MANOVA.....	85
Discriminant Analysis.....	85
Recognition Accuracy of Each Item Type.....	87
Certainty Ratings	89
Memory Mistakes in the Source-Monitoring Condition	90
Pairwise Comparisons of Recognition Rates	93
Summary.....	94
Chapter Six.....	96
Results Part Two: Signal Detection Analyses.....	96
Sensitivity and Response Bias.....	98
Initial Analyses	100
Outliers.....	100
Normality.	101
Overall false alarm rate and corresponding d' and c	101
Separate d' and c indices.	101
Homogeneity of variance.....	102
Adjusted Alpha Level	102
Sensitivity and Bias: Overall False Alarm Rate and Hit Rate.....	102
Overall false alarm rate.....	103
Overall sensitivity.....	103
Overall bias.	105
Sensitivity and Bias: Separate Types of False Alarm Rates and Hit Rate	105

Critical lure sensitivity and bias.....	107
Weak lure sensitivity and bias.....	109
Unrelated item sensitivity and bias.....	110
Summary	110
Chapter Seven	112
Discussion.....	112
Source Memory.....	112
False Memories	114
The Activation-Monitoring Theory.....	115
The Fuzzy-Trace Theory	118
Signal Detection	121
Implications and Applications	124
Limitations and Recommendations	128
False memory task limitations and recommendations.....	128
General limitations and recommendations.	130
Conclusions	133
References	137
List of Appendices	162
List of Tables	163
List of Figures.....	164

List of Tables

Table 1.1	Glossary of DRM Test Items	4
Table 4.1	DRM Critical Lures, Weak Lures, and List Items	70
Table 4.2	The Eight DRM List Presentation Conditions, Ordered Using the Balanced Latin Square Algorithm.....	71
Table 5.1	Demographic Data for the Four Age and Test Condition Groups	77
Table 5.2	Mean Recognition Proportions (and SD) for the Four Age and Condition Groups	85
Table 5.3	Mean Certainty Ratings (and SD) for the Four Age and Condition Groups for Item Types	89
Table 5.4	Source-Monitoring Condition Response Rates for the Two Age Groups.....	91
Table 6.1	Glossary of Signal Detection Result Terms.....	97
Table 6.2	Group Means for Measures Based on the Overall False Alarm Rate.....	103
Table 6.3	Group Means for Measures Based on the Separate Item Type False Alarm Rates	106
Table 7.1	Summary of Significant Differences from the Recognition Accuracy and Signal Detection Analyses for the Age Groups and Test Conditions	121

List of Figures

Figure 3.1	Example of noise and signal plus noise distributions and the placements of a liberal, neutral, and conservative criterion.	48
Figure 3.2	Hypothetical distributions (old and new items) and criteria (critical lures, related items, and unrelated items) according to Miller and Wolford's (1999) criterion-shift model	53
Figure 3.3	Hypothetical distributions (new unrelated items, old unrelated items, new related items (e.g., DRM list items), old related items, new critical lures, and old critical lures, respectively) and a single criteria according to the storage-based model (e.g., Roediger & McDermott, 1999; Wickens & Hirshman, 2000; Wixted & Stretch, 2000)	54
Figure 4.1	Percent of participants (per age group) who held each level of education	67
Figure 5.1	Canonical discriminant functions for each age and condition group on the two functions.	86
Figure 5.2	Mean recognition rates for the four item types across the two age groups ...	88
Figure 5.3	Mean recognition rates for the four item types across the two test condition... ..	88
Figure 5.4	Mean certainty ratings for three item types for the two age groups	90
Figure 5.5	Critical lure mean response option rates for younger and older adults in the source-monitoring task condition.....	92
Figure 5.6	Mean recognition rates of the four item types across the four age and condition groups	94
Figure 6.1	Mean overall false alarm rate across the age groups.....	104
Figure 6.2	Mean overall false alarm rate across the test conditions	104
Figure 6.3	Mean sensitivity (based on the overall false alarm rate) across the two age groups	104
Figure 6.4	Mean sensitivity (based on the overall false alarm rate) for the two test conditions.....	104
Figure 6.5	Mean criterion (based on the overall false alarm rate) across the two age groups	105

Figure 6.6	Mean criterion (based on the overall false alarm rate) for the two test conditions	105
Figure 6.7	Mean sensitivity (based on false alarms to critical lures) across the four age and condition groups.....	107
Figure 6.8	Mean critical lure, weak lure, and unrelated item criterion indices across the two age groups	108
Figure 6.9	Mean critical lure, weak lure, and unrelated item criterion indices across the two age groups	108
Figure 6.10	Mean weak lure and unrelated item sensitivity across the two age groups	109
Figure 6.11	Mean weak lure and unrelated item sensitivity across the two test conditions.	109