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**Memory Mistakes and Ageing: How Susceptibility to False Recognition  
and the Illusory Truth Effect Changes across the Lifespan**

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

**Master of Arts**

**in**

**Psychology**

at Massey University, Manawatu,

New Zealand.

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**2010**



## **Dedication**

To my fantastic Grandma Dicky, whose wise words of support and encouragement got me through undergraduate and to where I am today.

## Abstract

The purpose of the current research was to investigate if there was a common susceptibility to false memories and the illusory truth effect, and how performance in these two tasks varied with age. False memories were investigated using the Deese (1959) Roediger and McDermott (1995) (DRM) recognition paradigm, and the illusory truth effect was examined by asking participants to read and rate a set of statements labelled as true or false, and then soon after rate the truth of a subset of the previously presented statements amongst a set of new statements. The study followed a quasi-experimental, within/between-subjects design. The participants were 161 individuals aged from 16 to 92 years old. The sample was divided into three similar-sized age groups: young (16-39), middle (40-60), and old (61+). It was hypothesised that there would be a common susceptibility to DRM false memories and the illusory truth effect, and that older adults would perform more poorly than the young and middle age groups on the two tasks, and that the middle age group would perform more poorly on the two tasks than the young group. The results showed that only the old group demonstrated a common susceptibility to the two tasks. Unexpectedly, there were no age-related differences in the DRM false recognition task. However, in the illusory truth effect task the older groups' performance was poorer compared to the younger two groups, but performance did not differ between the young and middle age groups. These results (along with others) are discussed in relation to the mechanisms believed to underpin performance in the two tasks.

## Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to show my appreciation for my supervisor, Dr. Stephen Hill, without whom this project would not have been possible. Thank you for your guidance, dedication, expert advice, encouragement, and always making situations appear better than they initially seem to be.

In addition, thank you to the HOPE Foundation for awarding me with the Scholarship in Ageing Research. It was immensely helpful and it is always nice to know that someone else thinks that the research I undertook was worthwhile.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ian Begg for providing and permitting the use of his list of true and false statements, and thank you Mieke Sachsenweger for supplying and allowing me to use her recordings in the current research.

On a more personal level I would like to show my gratitude to my partner, James, for always being there for me and when necessary making my life a little bit less stressful. Also, thanks to my family who throughout this process have been available for some much needed encouragement, support, and just a chat, as well as telling me I better hurry up or I will not finish on time. Lastly, thank you to my good friends Melissa and Karen for a nice night off every now and again, and thanks for always being happy to listen to me talk about my research (whether good or bad) and provide advice when possible.

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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