



Apr 6th, 6:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Attitude Relevant Distortion Regarding the Recognition of Controversial Material

Tina Harrington
Illinois Wesleyan University

John Clavadetscher, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc>

Harrington, Tina and Clavadetscher, Faculty Advisor, John, "Attitude Relevant Distortion Regarding the Recognition of Controversial Material" (1990). *John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference*. 18.

<https://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/1990/posters/18>

This is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Commons @ IWU with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this material in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/ or on the work itself. This material has been accepted for inclusion by faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.

ATTITUDE RELEVANT DISTORTION REGARDING THE RECOGNITION OF CONTROVERSIAL MATERIAL

Tina Harrington, Dept. of Psychology, IWU, John Clavadetscher*

In many situations, people who cannot remember information perfectly nevertheless feel compelled to give a response. If full memory information is not available, where is the source of the confabulated "memory" reports? It has been theorized that recognition error is due to actual memory loss combined with confabulation based on a person's prior beliefs. Therefore, it was expected in this study that (1) recognition accuracy would decrease over time and that (2) the nature of the false recognitions would be consistent with the subject's prior attitudes on a controversial issue.

Subjects were given a questionnaire to assess their beliefs and attitudes on the choice regarding abortion. They read a brief story about a real abortion case and afterwards were asked to recognize to what extent (1) true, (2) modified, and (3) novel false material in a recognition test was present or not in the story. The forgetting curves for pro- and anti-choice subjects appeared different; whereas the pro-choice subjects showed a decrease in recognition accuracy over time, this trend was not clearly evident for the anti-choice subjects. Although data support the theory of decreased recognition accuracy over time due to memory loss data were not robust enough to conclude support or rejection for the theory that confabulation is biased by prior beliefs.