**Bemidji State University - Department of Psychology**

**Debriefing**

Thank you for participating in our research. We’re going to tell you the basics of what we did and the questions we were trying to answer. If you would like to be notified of our results (when they’re available), feel free to contact me. We can’t tell you about your individual results (nor will we ever report individual results) only about the overall group data. If you have any questions, concerns, comments, or simply want more information, please contact me by replying to this e-mail or simply sending a message to:  
  
[jrafferty@bemidjistate.edu](mailto:jrafferty@bemidjistate.edu)

As you know, we were interested in measuring your memory for the list of words that you initially saw. The math task was simply a way to put some time between the word list and the memory task. In the memory task, you were given a list of words and asked to circle those words that you believed you had previously seen. About half of the items were words that you had previously seen when they were presented at the beginning of the research. Most of the rest of the items were simply unrelated words that you had not seen. However, a few of the items were words that you had not seen but that were related to the words that you had seen. Based on previous research, we believed that you would mark these related (but not seen) items as words that you had seen; this is termed false recognition and can be compared with accurate recognition of words that were actually presented.

You were randomly placed in what we called the *distributed* condition; other participants were in what we called the *blocked* condition. In the *blocked* condition, the words were presented in groups of related words. In the *distributed* condition, the same words were presented but as separately as possible. In this way, it was not obvious that there were groups of related words. We wanted to see whether false recognition would be greater in the *blocked* condition than in the *distributed* condition.

Additionally, for each word that you recognized, you judged whether you *remembered* the word or simply *knew* that it had been presented. We were interested in comparing your *remember*/*know* judgments for words that you accurately recognized with your judgments for words that you falsely recognized. We wanted to see if false recognitions would differ from accurate recognitions for these *remember*/*know* judgments.

Finally, we wanted to see whether priming had an effect in the recognition task. In some cases, critical lures were listed in the recognition task prior to studied words related to them. In other cases, the associated words occurred prior to the critical lures. We wanted to see whether this ordering made any difference in the number of words accurately and falsely recognized.

The topic of false recognition has important applications, for example in the area of eyewitness identification. Almost everyone makes false recognitions; they are simply the result of the way humans process information. The procedure we used in this study is an accepted one. If you would like to learn more, a good place to start might be this article:

Roediger, H. L., & McDermott, K. B. (1995). Creating false memories: Remembering words not presented in lists. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, & Cognition, 21*, 803-814.

Your participation has helped us conduct basic research in this important area; thanks, again!