

Quotes uit internationaal onderzoek mbt Child abuse & memory – juli 2017

The results confirmed that even with a combination of multiple suggestive and elaborate social persuasion techniques under controlled laboratory conditions, the greater majority of the participants (between 70 per cent and 85 per cent) were *not* susceptible to these influences, and did not adopt false autobiographical memories of childhood events.

- Alan Scoboria et al, 'A Meta-Analysis of Memory Reports from Eight Peer-reviewed False Memory Implantation Studies' (2017) 25(2) *Memory* 146.
- Chris R Brewin and Bernice Andrews, 'Creating Memories for False Autobiographical Events In Childhood: A Systematic Review' (2016) *Applied Cognitive Psychology*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1002/acp.3220.

Abuse perpetrated within close relationships is more harmful than abuse perpetrated by strangers because of the violation of trust within a necessary relationship . . . [and the] coping strategy that this type of trauma often necessitates as a survival strategy: extended unawareness or 'blindness' to the betrayal trauma, and even complete inability to remember high betrayal trauma such as caregiver abuse.³⁷⁴ This strategy allows for the maintenance of necessary relationships, even those that contain mistreatment, in a way that supports attachment behaviours.³⁷⁵

- 374 Jennifer J Freyd, Anne P DePrince and Eileen L Zurbriggen, 'Self-reported Memory for Abuse Depends Upon Victim-Perpetrator Relationship' (2001) 2(3) *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation* 5.
- 375 Carly Partnitzke Smith and Jennifer J Freyd, 'Institutional Betrayal' (2014) 69(6) *American Psychologist* 575, 577.

Researchers report that 'betrayal trauma' (abuse perpetrated by family members or other caregivers that should provide safety) leads to higher rates of PTSD, dissociation, anxiety, depression and borderline personality disorder compared to interpersonal trauma perpetrated by strangers.³⁷⁶

- 376 Jennifer J Freyd and Pamela J Birrell, *Blind to Betrayal: Why We Fool Ourselves We Are Not Being Fooled / From Close Relationships to Institutional Betrayal* (John Wiley & Sons, 2013).

It is possible, temporarily, to entirely forget an experience of child sexual abuse or aspects of the abuse. Dissociation and complete forgetting⁴²⁵ were significant among a sample of victims whose age at the onset of abuse was in early childhood.⁴²⁶ The abuse may have been so severe that stress interfered with the encoding and recall of these experiences.

- 425 Participants were child sexual abuse survivors aged 31–69. Heather B MacIntosh, Kara Fletcher, and Delphine Collin-Vézina, "'As Time Went on, I Just Forgot About It": Thematic Analysis of Spontaneous Disclosures of Recovered Memories of Childhood Sexual Abuse' (2016) 25(1) *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 56; Nadia Wager, 'Psychogenic Amnesia for Childhood Sexual Abuse and Risk for Sexual Revictimisation in both Adolescence and Adulthood' (2012) 12(3) *Sex Education* 331.
- 426 Participants were aged between 17 and 60, and had experience of child sexual abuse, physical abuse and/or other trauma. Bette L Bottoms et al, 'Trauma Severity and Defensive Emotion-Regulation Reactions as Predictors of Forgetting Childhood Trauma' (2012) 13(3) *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation* 291.

People diagnosed with stress disorders and betrayal anger often experience negative intrusive memories that may block access to memories of personal life events and verbal memory, even when asked free-recall questions. Some studies have shown that the presence of anger, which often results from perceived betrayal within a trauma narrative,

can decrease the specificity of contextual autobiographical memory detail retrieved. One explanation was that rumination behaviours prevent cognitive access to memory detail.⁴⁴⁵

- 445 Courtney Welton-Mitchell, 'Associations Between Thematic Content and Memory Detail in Trauma Narratives' (2013) 27(4) *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 462.

Overall, research has shown that adults tend to have enduring and accurate memories of traumatic or negatively stressful events, even if some traumatic events are subject to ordinary forgetting.⁴⁴⁶ Adult victims whose childhood experiences were more uncomfortable than traumatic may have forgotten them completely or only realised in adulthood that they were sexually inappropriate or abusive.⁴⁴⁷

- 446 Cara Laney and Elizabeth Loftus, 'Traumatic Memories Are Not Necessarily Accurate Memories' (2005) 50(13) *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry* 823; Kathleen M Lalande and George A Bonanno, 'Retrospective Memory Bias for the Frequency of Potentially Traumatic Events: A Prospective Study' (2011) 3(2) *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* 165; Heather B Macintosh, Kara Fletcher and Delphine Collin-Vézina, "'As Time Went On, I Just Forgot About It": Thematic Analysis of Spontaneous Disclosures of Recovered Memories of Childhood Sexual Abuse' (2016) 25(1) *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 56.
- 447 Richard J McNally and Elke Geraerts, 'A New Solution to the Recovered Memory Debate' (2009) 4(2) *Perspectives on Psychological Science* 126.

Exposure to childhood trauma can lead to over-general memories and reduced autobiographical recall specificity in adults. Abuse with a longer duration and higher severity results in less recall.⁴⁵¹ Victims who reported weak subjective memory of abuse (self-reported forgetting of abusive events) made fewer memory errors and typically experienced more severe forms of abuse.⁴⁵²

- 451 Andrea Follmer Greenhoot et al, 'Stress and Autobiographical Memory Functioning' in Jodi Quas and Robyn Fivush (eds), *Emotion in Memory and Development: Biological, Cognitive and Social Considerations* (Oxford University Press, 2009).
- 452 Simona Ghetti et al, 'What Can Subjective Forgetting Tell Us about Memory for Childhood Trauma?' (2006) 34(5) *Memory & Cognition* 1011.

Samenvatting

There is a long history of psychological research on suggestibility and false memories, and the 'memory wars' between treating clinicians and experimental psychologists. These issues were set in perspective by findings that susceptibility to post-event misinformation is limited to minor details, not core memories. Moreover, only a very small percentage of people recover memories of child sexual abuse in therapy. Contemporary research findings demonstrate that concerns about the prevalence of false memories of child sexual abuse appear to have been exaggerated.

Most people who have experienced childhood sexual abuse have continuous memories of the abuse. However, abuse memories are subject to normal forgetting. Although uncommon, it is possible temporarily to entirely forget an experience of childhood sexual abuse or aspects of the abuse.

Memories are sensitive to retrieval cues and are not recalled the same way every time. Memories are usually triggered by a range of salient retrieval cues that are personal. Some obvious examples are a particular taste or touch, returning to the location of an event, reading about or seeing a similar event in the media or on television, becoming a parent, and so forth.

Adolescents who have experienced childhood sexual abuse can have autobiographical memory dysfunction such as over-general and short memories, and poor event memory retrieval. People who adopt avoidant coping styles after subjectively traumatic experiences are prone to more memory fragmentation and superficial recall for personal life events.

Details about recurring events will often be remembered, but may be unrelated to particular moments in time, and recall of specific details about a particular recurring event in a series may not be possible, or may be prone to error. Irrespective of age, individuals who experience recurring events can usually indicate that the events took place more than once, but tend to underestimate the event frequency. Although memory for dates and time frames can be inaccurate, providing information about the duration, sequence and dates of recurring events is a skill that develops with age.

Methods used

Five research methods applied to memory in forensic contexts are described to review their contributions to assessments of memories of child sexual abuse victims. Controlled laboratory experiments explore causal relationships between variables of interest. Forensic memory research has been dominated by eyewitness research. Eyewitness studies test memory for a staged crime committed by an unknown perpetrator. False memory studies examine how susceptible individuals are to suggestion following exposure to wordlists, post-event misinformation or implanted 'memories'. Child sexual abuse analogue studies assess memories for analogous negative experiences in natural or real-world settings. Field studies are conducted with trauma and child sexual abuse victims. These studies differ in their internal, external and ecological validity. In addition to studies on event memory, research on autobiographical memory is essential to understanding how people form memories of child sexual abuse.

Autobiographical memories of abusive events are subject to ordinary forgetting. They can also be modified, strengthened or weakened by reconstructive processes upon retrieval and reconsolidation. Discontinuous memories of unreported sexual abuse elicited during therapy through hypnosis, guided imagery and other techniques have a high propensity for being false, whereas spontaneously recovered memories are associated with forgetting.

Recurring incidents of abuse, as opposed to a single, one-off incident, account for around half of the reported cases of child sexual abuse. Children's memories for details that recur across numerous events tend to be strengthened and their reports of gist information and invariant features of repeated events are highly accurate. Memories for the gist and invariant features of recurring events are also resistant to error and misinformation. However, errors about specific occasions when variable or unique features of repeated events occurred are common. Children can indicate whether abuse took place more than once, but children and adults underestimate the frequency of repeated events. When using landmark events, such as birthdays or holidays, children typically interpret them prospectively not retrospectively. Young children lack the skill to specify the time of an event but can link it to a familiar action pattern.

Bron:

Goodman-Delahunty, J, Nolan, M A and van Gijn-Grosvenor, E L (2017). *Empirical Guidance on the Effects of Child Sexual Abuse on Memory and Complainants' Evidence*. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney.
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