

Title: False reports of childhood events in appropriate interviews.

Running title: False reports in appropriate interviews

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Abstract

The present study employed the ‘parental misinformation’ paradigm to examine whether individuals report false events from their childhood even when they are interviewed in an appropriate manner by a trained interviewer. Each participant was interviewed on three occasions. By the final interview, one participant produced a ‘full’ report, and six participants produced ‘partial’ reports of childhood events that did not occur. Whilst participants reported perceiving greater pressure to report the false events than the real events, independent judges' ratings of social pressure in the interviews did not differ as a function of what type of event participants were being asked about. Participants also reported higher confidence in their parents’, compared to their own, recall of events from their childhood. False reports were also positively correlated with scores on both the full, and the revised, versions of the Dissociative Experiences Scale, and negatively correlated with score on the Self-Monitoring scale. These results indicate that, despite being interviewed in an appropriate manner by a trained interviewer, some participants will falsely report events from their childhoods.

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Introduction

This paper reports a partial extension and replication of the work by Loftus and Pickrell (1995; see also Hyman, Husband, & Billings, 1995) on the use of the parental misinformation paradigm in the creation of false ‘memories’ of childhood events.

This paradigm involves contacting participants’ parents and asking them to provide details of events that did, or did not, happen during the participants’ childhood. These parental reports are then used as the basis for constructing interviews in which participants are asked about both real (i.e. parentally-reported) and false (i.e. experimenter-generated) events.

The use of ‘memory recovery’ techniques

In addition to using parental reports and repeated interviews, previous studies of false memory creation in the laboratory have also employed a number of ‘memory recovery’ techniques reportedly used by ‘recovered memory therapists’ (for example, guided imagery, journalling, imagination, repeated suggestions, telling them that they will be required to remember more during the next session; Loftus & Pickrell, 1995; Hyman et al., 1995; Hyman & Billings, 1998; Porter, Yuille & Lehman, 1999). It is argued that the use of such techniques is likely to increase the chance of clients coming to believe, or at least report, falsely, that certain events happened to them when they did not (Lindsay & Read, 1994, 2001). Crucially, however, we do not yet know what the baseline is for false reports in interviews using the parental misinformation paradigm, where such additional suggestive techniques and procedures are *not* used.

The only exception to this is the first experiment reported by Hyman et al. (1995) in which, although participants were not encouraged to use any specific ‘memory recovery’ techniques, they were nevertheless informed participants that the goal of the research was to “investigate how much [the participant] could remember by the end of the second session” (p. 185). They also explicitly asked participants to think about the events between sessions. Whilst not highly suggestive, this explicit instruction to remember more before the next session and to think about the events between sessions might have led participants to engage in some kind of memory recovery between interview sessions.

To our knowledge no study to date has examined the effects of the parental misinformation paradigm alone, without the use of other suggestive techniques. The first aim of the present study, therefore, was to examine the ‘baseline’ level of false reporting of childhood events using the parental misinformation paradigm when trained interviewers conduct the interviews.

Social pressure

Even if participants are questioned in an appropriate manner, the suggestive nature of the parental misinformation paradigm is itself likely to introduce social pressures into the interviews. As noted by Register and Kihlstrom (1988), repeatedly asking someone about the same event can, in certain contexts, act as a kind of implicit negative feedback that the person did not ‘get it right’ the first time they were asked. With regard to false childhood memory research this issue of social pressure has been noted but not yet explicitly explored, with only vague indications given in the description of the experimental procedure of what level of pressure was involved (e.g.

Loftus & Pickrell, 1995, p. 722). Whilst researchers have attempted to operationalise different degrees of social pressure (e.g. Malinoski & Lynn, 1999), the precise relationship between actual and experienced social pressure in interviews and the likelihood of falsely reporting childhood events has yet to be established.

However, in related areas of psychology, social pressure has been found to be an important factor that can lead people, for example, to confess falsely in police interrogations (Gudjonsson, 2003; Ofshe, 1989; Pearse & Gudjonsson, 1999). Several researchers have also noted the possible role of social pressure in relation to claims of childhood sexual abuse (see Brown, 1995; Kluft, 1999; Ost, Costall, & Bull, 2001; 2002). Therefore, the second aim of the present study was to monitor the level of social pressure in interviews and examine any possible relationship with false reporting.

Individual differences

The third aim of the present study was to follow up and extend recent research that has examined the influence of various individual differences on false reports of childhood events. The Dissociative Experiences Scale version C (DES, Bernstein & Putnam, 1986; Waller, Putnam, & Carlson, 1996; DES_C, adapted for use with non-clinical samples by Wright & Loftus, 1999) was included, as previous research has demonstrated that it correlates positively with measures of false memory creation (Hyman & Billings, 1998). The explanation for this effect is that individuals who score highly on this measure experience more disruptions in the integration of thoughts, awareness and memory and therefore may be more prone to accepting external information as a personal memory (Candel, Merckelbach & Kuijpers, 2003; Hyman & Billings, 1998; Merckelbach, Muris & Rassin, 1999; Ost, Fellows & Bull,

1997; see also Eisen & Carlson, 1998; Qin & Johnson, in press). The Self Monitoring scale (SM, Snyder, 1974) was included because higher scores on this scale have been found to be associated with false reporting, suggesting that false memories may be more likely to be reported by individuals who are more 'eager to please' the investigator (Ost, Vrij, Costall, & Bull, 2002; see also Gudjonsson, 1995). Finally, the Gudjonsson Compliance Scale (GCS, Gudjonsson, 1989) was included as a direct self-report measure of a person's susceptibility, when under pressure, to comply with instructions from an authority figure. It might be the case that, when questioned by an allegedly 'authoritative' interviewer (i.e. one who access to detailed information about their past), participants may well comply with that authority figure and claim to remember events when, in fact, they do not (Gudjonsson, 2003).

Participants' confidence in the source of the misinformation

The final aim of the present study was to follow up previous findings regarding confidence and false reporting. Several studies have found that participants report being significantly less confident when recalling 'false' events compared to when recalling 'true' events (Hyman & Billings, 1998; Porter et al., 1999; Wade, Garry, Read, & Lindsay, 2002). There is, however, an additional question that has yet to be explored in adult participants, namely the perceived credibility of the source of the misinformation. Research has shown that children are more likely to incorporate misinformation if it is presented by credible source (Lampinen & Smith, 1995; Pornpitakpan, 2004). Thus, in the present study, we explored (although we did not explicitly manipulate) participants' confidence in their own recall, as well as their confidence in the source of the misinformation (in this case their confidence in their parents' accurate recall of events).

Method

Participants

A total of 31 participants (four males and 27 females) completed all three interview sessions. The ages of the participants ranged from 18 to 38 years ($M = 19.84$ yrs, $SD = 3.5$ yrs). Fifteen of the participants took part in order to gain course credits from the department's participant pool scheme, and the remaining 16 were paid £20 for their participation¹. All participants were first-year psychology undergraduates who responded to a notice asking for participants for a study entitled “Memories of Childhood.”

Procedure

Participants were recruited via a notice displayed in the Psychology Department. Participants then contacted the first author who obtained a contact address for the participants' parent(s). Consent was then obtained to send a questionnaire to the participants' parent(s) and the participants were thanked and told that they would be contacted once the questionnaire had been returned. Participants were advised at this stage that it was important that they *should not discuss the contents of the questionnaire* with their parents. A covering letter accompanied by the Childhood Events Questionnaire (CEQ) was sent to the participants' parent(s). The CEQ asked participants' parents to provide details of a list of eight events that may, or may not, have occurred to the participant as a child. The eight events were similar to those that have been used in previous research, and consisted of: going to hospital, becoming

¹ An important point raised by one reviewer was the possibility that the participants who were paid were more motivated than participants who were receiving course credit. We agree with this suggestion however, unfortunately, we did not record which participants were paid £20 and which participated in return for course credit.

lost, an eventful family holiday, an eventful birthday celebration, wedding attended, winning a contest, death of a friend or relative, and a serious accident involving a friend or family member. Participants' parents were asked to provide one example of each of these events. If more than one such event occurred they were asked to provide details on the event that they considered the most memorable to their child. Parents were asked explicitly to state if no such event occurred (by writing 'did not occur'). A covering letter emphasised the importance of *not discussing* information in any of the questionnaires with their daughter/son. A pre-paid envelope was provided for parents to return the questionnaires.

Once the questionnaires had been returned, participants were contacted (either by telephone or electronic mail) and three interview sessions were arranged. All of the sessions were video-, and audio-recorded. In each of the three interview sessions, participants were asked about one parentally-reported event and one experimenter-created event (the same events were used during all three interviews). There were six interviewers (all female) who each interviewed the same participant on each of the three separate occasions.

Selection and presentation of events

For each participant two events were selected. For the parentally-reported event, the most detailed event was used. The experimenter-created event was selected on the basis that a participant's parents had explicitly reported that such an event had not occurred. Also, for ethical reasons, it was inappropriate to suggest to participants that they had witnessed the death of a close friend or relative, hence this event was not used as the basis for any of the experimenter-created events. In order to control for

possible age effects, the experimenter-created events were, on average, suggested as having occurred at the same age (6.00 years) as the parentally-reported event (6.85 years). Both events were presented to the participants as having been provided by their parents. The interviewers were blind as to the source of the event information (i.e. whether it was a parentally-reported or experimenter-created event)². In line with the methodology developed by Loftus and Pickrell (1995) and Hyman et al. (1995), the experimenter-created event was always the second event that participants were asked about.

Interview structure

All interview sessions took place in the observation suite in the Psychology department. The six interviewers (all female) attended an interviewer training session conducted by the fourth author. This ensured that they were all familiar with techniques of appropriate interviewing which emphasised the importance of gaining rapport and of following the phased approach (Milne & Bull, 1999; 2003) as recommended in Government guidance in the United Kingdom (Home Office, 2002). At the beginning of each interview session interviewers were provided with an interview sheet for each participant (one sheet per event). The interview sheets firstly gave a brief instruction for the interviewer to read to the participant in order to orient the participant toward the general nature of the event that they would be asked about, for example:

"Your parents have told us about a time when you went to hospital as a child.

Can you remember anything about that?"

² At the end of the study one interviewer (a psychology postgraduate student) confessed that she had

Interview session one

The interviewer read the orientating statement to the participant and then asked them to recall freely whatever information they could about that event. If the participant reported an event that was not the parentally-reported event, the interviewer informed the participant that they were reporting the wrong event. Underneath this general event information was a list of between five and six prompts. When the participant had finished their free recall, the interviewer then read out the following prompts. These prompts, in order, consisted of the following information that had been gained from their parents of the general event details: age of child at the time, where event happened, emotional responses of child, what happened, who was involved, and any other detail that came to mind.

For the experimenter-created events, the general orienting statement and order of prompts was the same but the events used were ones that had been reported as having happened to *other* participants in this sample. Experimenter-created events were therefore always based on another participant's parentally-reported event (e.g. participant X's experimenter-created event was based on a parentally-reported event that had been given for participant Y). In this way it was hoped that the experimenter-created event would be a plausible, yet relatively unique event containing novel details. All participants were read all the prompts that had been provided for both events and the number of prompts was held constant across both event types for that participant (i.e. if the parentally-reported event contained five prompts, then five prompts were also used for the experimenter-created event).

guessed that one of the events had not occurred, yet three of the interviewers (non-psychology

The interviewers were simply instructed to obtain from the participant as much detail as they could with regard to the two events using free recall and as few, or as many, of the prompts as they deemed necessary (given the ‘control’ of this mentioned above). At the end of this interview session, participants were reminded that it was important they should not discuss the events with their parents before the end of the study. The interviewer and participant then arranged a time to meet again in approximately one week’s time. Unlike previous studies, participants were *not* told that they would be asked about the same two events the following week, nor were they encouraged to engage in any kind of memory-recovery exercises (e.g. thinking about each of the events for five minutes a day).

Interview session two

The procedure for the second interview session was identical to the first except that, prior to reading the general orienting statement, participants were asked whether they had discussed events from the previous week with their parents (see below).

Participants were again read the general orienting statements and asked to recall freely whatever information they could about the two events. At the end of this interview session participants were again reminded that they should not discuss the events with their parents, and the time of the third and final interview session was arranged.

Interview session three

The procedure for the third and final interview was the same as for the first two sessions. After this final interview ended, participants completed a brief

postgraduate students) expressed surprise at being told this.

questionnaire that asked them, amongst other items, how pressured they felt to recall each event (on a scale from one to seven where a score of one meant 'no pressure' and a score of seven meant 'highly pressured) and how confident they were that they (as well as their parents) had accurately recalled the events (also on a scale of one to seven, where a score of one meant 'not at all confident' and a score of seven meant 'highly confident'). Finally, participants were asked to complete the Gudjonsson Compliance Scale (Gudjonsson, 1989), the Dissociative Experiences Scale (DESc, Bernstein & Putnam, 1986; Wright & Loftus, 1999), and the Self Monitoring Scale (Snyder, 1974). Order of presentation of the questionnaires was counter-balanced.

After they had completed the individual differences measures, participants were then asked again whether they had, at any point during the study, discussed with their parents any of the events they had been asked about. They were reassured that there was no penalty had they done so. At this stage four participants admitted that they had tried to discuss the events (usually the experimenter-created event) with their parents, but that the parents had flatly refused to talk about it. Participants were then debriefed and asked whether they had any questions or concerns about the study. They were then thanked for their participation, debriefed, and either paid twenty pounds, or provided with a participant pool credit sheet.

Independent judge's rating of social pressure in interviews

In order to investigate possible differences in the way in which interviewers questioned participants about the two different event types, one independent judge rated the social pressure in each set of interviews on a scale of one to seven (where a score of one meant 'no pressure' and a score of seven meant 'highly pressured') by

watching the videotapes of each session. There were no explicit criteria for judging social pressure and the judge's rating was based on the overall impression of the judge of the degree of coercion, requests for more information, inappropriate uses of silence and so forth in each set of interviews. A second judge rated a subset of the interviews in order to provide an inter-rater analysis.

Results

Baseline rates of false memory

Two raters (JO and SF) initially classified all of the memory reports (parentally-reported and experimenter-created) according to the criteria devised by Porter et al. (1999), based upon the video-recordings and transcripts of the interviews. Porter et al.'s criteria are as follows: (1) participant reported remembering the suggested event; (2) the participant agreed with and/or incorporated the information clues (prompts) into the memory report; (3) the participant reported more information than the information clues (prompts); (4) the incident was not remembered upon its initial presentation; and (5) in debriefing, the participant reported not discussing the event at any time during the study period. If all of these criteria were fulfilled then the participant was rated as having provided a 'full' false report. If the participant reported that they remembered the event but, for example, provided no more information than had been provided in the prompts, or indicated that they were unsure it was a 'real' memory, then the participant was rated as having provided a 'partial' false report. If none of these criteria were fulfilled then the participant was rated as providing 'no' false report. The actual events (both parentally-, and experimenter-

created) that participants were asked to recall and the mean age at which the events occurred are shown in Table 1.

(Table 1 about here)

As also shown in Table 1, by the final interview, of the total of 31 participants, 5 (16.1%) were scored as having given 'no' report of the parentally-reported event, 6 (19.4%) were scored as having given a 'partial' report, and 20 (64.5%) were scored as having given a 'full' report. By the final interview, 24 participants (77.4%) were scored as having given 'no' report of the experimenter-created event, six participants (18.6%) were scored as having given a 'partial' report, and only one participant (3%) was scored as having given a 'full' report (see appendix I for an extract from this 'full' false report). Thus a total of seven participants (22.6%), according to Porter et al.'s (1999) criteria, produced either a 'full', or a 'partial' report of the experimenter-created event by the final interview. These levels of false reporting are similar to those found by Loftus and Pickrell (1995) and Hyman et al. (1995) but are much lower than those reported by Porter et al. (1999).

Age effects

Although the parentally-reported events occurred at a slightly later age (\underline{M} =6.85 yrs, \underline{SD} =7.88) than the experimenter-created events (\underline{M} =6.00 yrs, \underline{SD} =1.83) this difference was not significantly different, $t(60) = 1.80, p > .05$. There was no difference between the ages at which the parentally-reported events occurred and whether participants provided a 'full' report, a 'partial' report, or 'no' report of that event, $\text{Chi}^2(2)=2.77, p > .05$. There was also no difference between the ages at which the experimenter-

created event was suggested to have occurred as a function of whether participants provided a ‘full’, ‘partial’, or ‘no’ report of that event, $\text{Chi}^2(2)=1.76, p>.05$.

(Table 2 about here)

Judge’s ratings of social pressure in the interviews

Overall, the judge’s mean ratings of social pressure (on a scale of one = ‘low’ to seven = ‘high’) in the interviews were relatively low (parentally-reported events, $\underline{M}=2.00, \underline{SD}=0.89$; experimenter-generated events, $\underline{M}=1.96, \underline{SD}=1.01$). The judge’s estimates of the amount of pressure did not differ as a function of whether the participant was being asked about a parentally-reported or an experimenter-created event, $t(30)=0.24, p>.05, \underline{d}=0.04^3$. This suggests that the training the interviewers received ensured that they interviewed participants in an appropriate manner.

Participants’ ratings of social pressure in the interviews

In contrast to the low levels of social pressure observed by the independent judge, participants gave significantly higher ratings of perceived social pressure in relation to trying to remember experimenter-created than in relation to parentally-reported events, $t(30)=-2.88, p<.01, \underline{d}=0.63$ (see Table 2). However, there was no correlation between participants’ self-reports of perceived social pressure in the interviews and the levels of recall for the experimenter-created events (Kendall’s $\text{Tau}_b=-.057, p>.05$). Overall, the mean scores therefore indicate that, even given the appropriate nature of the interviewing, participants still felt a degree of social pressure to report

³ A second judge rated the social pressure in thirteen of the interviews to provide an inter-rater reliability analysis of the first judge’s ratings. Kendall’s Tau_b correlations indicated that both judges were relatively consistent in their ratings of social pressure across both event types: Parentally-reported events - Kendall’s $\text{Tau}_b = .79, p<.005$; experimenter-created events – Kendall’s $\text{Tau}_b = .80, p<.005$. All cases of disagreement were no more than one rating category apart.

details of both types of event, and felt significantly more pressure to try and remember the experimenter-generated event than the parentally-reported event.

Personality variables and false memory

As shown in Table 3, the findings of previous studies were replicated regarding the positive correlation between participants' scores on the Dissociative Experiences Scale (DESc) and their levels of recall for experimenter-created events (Kendall's $Tau_b = .256, p < .05$). Thus our findings confirm those of earlier research that suggest that high scores on the DESc are associated with higher levels of susceptibility to suggestion (Candel et al., 2003; Eisen & Carlson, 1998; Hyman & Billings, 1998; Merckelbach et al., 1999; Ost et al., 1997). However, Waller et al. (1996) have argued that only a subset of eight items on the DESc questionnaire is needed to discriminate pathological from non-pathological 'dissociators' (i.e. those who are likely to be at risk of suffering dissociative disorders). We reanalysed our DESc data in the light of Waller, et al.'s (1996) proposal, using only the eight items they suggest (as opposed to the 28 items in the original scale), producing the new DES_t score. In fact the correlation between this revised scale and levels of false recall was very similar to that for the full scale (Kendall's $Tau_b = .312, p < .05$). The significant relationship between scores on the DES_t and levels of false reporting is important because it suggests that this subset of items, as well as being related to pathological dissociation, are also related to suggestibility (see also Eisen & Carlson, 1998). Furthermore, as shown in Table 3, there were significant positive correlations between the DESc, the DES_t, and the GCS, which suggest that there may be a relationship between dissociative experiences and compliant responding (see also Merckelbach, Muris, Horselenberg, & Stougie, 2000). A negative correlation was

also found between participants' scores on the Self Monitoring scale (Snyder, 1974) and levels of false recall (Kendall's $\tau_b = -.336$, $p < .05$). Individuals who scored highly on the self-monitoring scale were therefore less likely to report false details of the childhood events (*cf.* Ost et al., 2002). No relationship was found between participants' scores on the Gudjonsson Compliance Scale (Gudjonsson, 1989) and levels of false reporting (Kendall's $\tau_b = .004$, $p > .05$).

(table 3 about here)

Participants' confidence in their reports of childhood events

We analysed the confidence ratings that were given by participants after the final interview in relation to both the parentally-reported events and the experimenter-created events. As shown in Table 2, participants' confidence ratings that they had remembered the parentally-reported events accurately were significantly higher ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.58$) than their confidence ratings that they had accurately remembered the experimenter-created event ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 2.32$), $t(30) = 3.91$, $p < .005$, $d = 0.89$.

We also asked how confident participants were that *their parents* had accurately remembered the events (see Table 2). Again, participants gave significantly higher ratings for their confidence in their parents' recall for the parentally-reported event than for the experimenter-created event, $t(30) = 2.42$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.46$. Participants gave significantly higher ratings of confidence in their parents' recall of the events than their own for both the parentally-reported (participant $M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.58$, parent $M = 5.58$, $SD = 1.40$), $t(30) = -2.52$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.62$, and for the experimenter-created

event (participant $M=2.87$, $SD=2.32$, parent $M=4.74$, $SD=2.12$), $t(30)=-3.24$, $p<.005$, $d=0.80$.

Discussion

One of the concerns voiced in the literature (e.g. Ofshe & Watters, 1994) is that 'false' memories of childhood sexual abuse may be 'caused' by therapists recommending the use of certain 'memory recovery' techniques to those in their care and misleading them to report events that did not occur. The main finding of the present study, however, was that just under a quarter of participants (22.6%) reported details of childhood events that did not occur, even when interviewed in an appropriate manner about those events by trained interviewers. Furthermore, both the judges' and participants' ratings of social pressure were low, possibly indicating that the suggestive nature of the parental misinformation procedure itself appears to be sufficient to produce such reports. The level of false reporting was consistent with the earlier studies of laboratory false memories (e.g. Loftus & Pickrell, 1995; Hyman et al., 1995), but much lower than that obtained more recent studies (e.g. Porter et al., 1999). This raises questions concerning what it might be about this misinformation procedure that leads participants, in the absence of specific 'memory recovery' techniques, to come to report details of events that they did not experience. The present study addressed three possibilities: social pressure, individual differences, and participants' confidence in the source of the misleading information (i.e. their parents' alleged reports of event from their childhood).

Social pressure

Despite the fact that an independent judge gave consistently low ratings of social pressure in the interviews, participants nevertheless reported that they felt under more pressure to recall the experimenter-created events, compared to the parentally reported events. However, this pressure in itself did not lead our participants to make false reports of such events. Nevertheless, it is difficult to assess comprehensively the impact that social pressure had on false reports because social pressure was not experimentally manipulated. Future research should examine the effects of manipulating experimentally the levels of social pressure, perhaps by comparing participants who are encouraged to try to remember as much as they can to participants who are not (see Malinoski & Lynn, 1999), by comparing trained interviewers with interviewers who have not received any training, or by comparing participants who are asked to engage in 'memory recovery' techniques compared to those who are not.

Individual differences

In line with previous research (e.g. Hyman & Billings, 1998; Eisen & Carlson, 1998; Porter et al., 1999) positive correlations were found between the Dissociative Experiences Scale (DESc, Wright & Loftus, 1999) and levels of recall for the experimenter-generated event. Interestingly, a positive correlation was also found between levels of false recall and scores on the shortened version of the DESc, the DES*t* (*cf.* Waller et al., 1996). In light of the correlation with scores on the GCS, future research should be directed towards examining its relationship, both with compliance, and with self-reports of traumatic or emotional events (e.g. Merckelbach, et al., 2000). Of course, caution must be exercised in any interpretation of the

correlation between the DES_c, DES_t, GCS, and false reports given, firstly, the limited sample size and, secondly, that the correlational analysis does not allow the inference of cause and effect relationships. A negative relationship was found between scores on the self-monitoring scale (Snyder, 1974) and levels of false recall that stands in contrast to previous research (e.g. Ost et al., 2002). One tentative explanation might be that high self-monitors were aware that they were not reading any cues from the interviewer that they should report as much as they could about the false event and therefore complied with this in order to appear to be good experimental participants. The other explanation is that high self-monitors were simply more cautious and monitored their responses more carefully than low self monitors.

Confidence

Participants reported having greater confidence overall in their parents' memory than their own, regardless of which event they were asked about. In one sense this finding is not surprising given that the events related to the participants' childhoods.

However, there was no relationship between participants' *confidence in their parents' memory* and the levels of recall for either the parentally-reported, or the experimenter-created event. In other words, although participants reported having more confidence in what their parents had allegedly reported, this did not necessarily lead them to report that they remembered more about either event (conversely, the fact that a participant remembered more about an event did not lead them to rate their parents' recall more highly). Perhaps, rather than examining confidence, future research should address how credible participants rated the accounts that were (allegedly) given by their parents (see Lampinen & Smith, 1995; Pornpitakpan, 2004).

Future research

Future research should therefore address the effects of systematically varying the levels of social pressure both on the production of reports of parentally-reported and experimenter-created events, and also the effect this might have on reports produced by more dissociative, compliant, or high self-monitoring individuals. Research should also examine whether the use of inappropriate interviewing techniques, or the use of ‘memory recovery’ techniques increases the inherent pressure on participants to produce a report. Research should also address in more detail factors that may alter the perceived authority, or credibility, of the source of (mis)information (see Pornpitakpan, 2004 for a review). For example, research has demonstrated that misinformation is more likely to be accepted when it is presented by an authority figure (Paddock & Terranova, 2001; Roper & Shewan, 2002), by an interviewer who behaves authoritatively (Bull & Corran, 2003), or by a confederate wearing dark clothes (Vrij, Pannell & Ost, in press). These issues all need further exploration with regards to false reports of childhood events.

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Table 1. The number of reports of parentally-reported and experimenter-created events (including mean age and description) produced in the final interview (N=31).

Parentally-reported events		Experimenter-created events	
Full report (64.5%), n=20	Mean age (SD)	Full report (3%), n=1	Age
Hospital (n=5), lost (n=3), holiday (n=3), birthday (n=3), wedding (n=1), contest (n=4), accident (n=1)	7.25 yrs (1.83)	Hospital (n=1)	4 yrs
Partial report (19.4%), n=6	Mean age (SD)	Partial report (18.6%), n=6	Mean age (SD)
Holiday (n=1), birthday (n=3), wedding (n=1), accident (n=1)	6.58 yrs (1.85)	Hospital (n=3), birthday (n=1), wedding (n=1), contest (n=1)	6.08 yrs (1.90)
No report (16.1%), n=5	Mean age (SD)	No report (77.4%), n=24	Mean age (SD)
Hospital (n=1), lost (n=1), birthday (n=1), contest (n=1), accident (n=1)	5.60 yrs (1.81)	Hospital (n=5), lost (n=9), birthday (n=3), wedding (n=1), contest (n=5), accident (n=1)	6.06 yrs (1.85)
	6.85 yrs (1.88)		6.00 yrs (1.83)

Table 2. Mean ratings of perceived social pressure to recall, and confidence in, parentally-reported and experimenter-created events (N = 31).

Dependent measure	Parentally- reported events	Experimenter- created events
Participants' mean rating of social pressure **	3.32 (1.57)	4.41 (1.87)
Participants' confidence in their own recall ***	4.64 (1.58)	2.87 (2.32)
Participants' confidence in their parents' recall *	5.58 (1.40)	4.74 (2.12)
Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$		

Table 3: Kendall's Tau_b correlations between levels of false reporting (FR) and individual differences measures (N=31)

	Level of FR	DESc	DESt	GCS	SM
Level of FR	---	.256 *	.312 *	.004 <u>ns</u>	-.336 *
DESc		---	.787 **	.291 *	.135 <u>ns</u>
DESt			---	.296 *	.081 <u>ns</u>
GCS				---	-.079 <u>ns</u>
SM					---

* denotes $p < .05$, ** denotes $p < .001$, ns denotes $p > .05$

N.B. The correlations between the level of false reporting and the DESc / DESt were one-tailed. All remaining correlations were two-tailed.

Appendix I

Example of full false report.

Initial interview (week 1):

Interviewer: “Your parents have told use about a time when you went to the hospital as a child. Can you remember anything about that?” (*The following prompts were then read out when the participant claimed not to remember the event in question*).

“You were 4 years old at the time (prompt 1). It happened whilst you were at home (prompt 2). You were upset (prompt 3). You couldn’t stand up and kept falling back asleep (prompt 4). Your father was there (prompt 5). You were taken to hospital where they diagnosed you as having low blood sugar (prompt 6).”

Participant: “It was when I was living in [place name]? No I can’t remember anything about the hospital or the place. It was [place name] general hospital where my mum used to work? She used to work in the baby ward there ... but I can’t... no. I know if I was put under hypnosis or something I’d be able to remember it better, but I honestly can’t remember.”

Second interview (week 2):

Interviewer: “OK onto the second one. Going to hospital”

Participant: “I’ve been thinking some more about this, but I can’t... I still can’t easily picture it ... I can remember the giant [place name] hospital ... it was like of the biggest places I ever saw when I was about 4 years old ... I think it might have had a couple of giant long corridors, which worried me a little bit. I can’t remember much about when I was seriously ill [pause]. Obviously I was upset at the time. Mum and dad noticed that I was seriously ill ... it’s too difficult for me to remember. I can’t...”

Final interview (week 3):

Interviewer: “OK. The second event ... going to hospital.”

Participant: “I was living in [place name] at the time. It must have been on a Sunday because my dad was there. He was always around on a Sunday ... so I guess I must

have passed out a lot from what I can gather. I think my mum was panicking quite a lot that I kept passing out. I don't remember much. I don't remember the trip to the hospital because I think I was probably out cold at the time ... but from what I can gather, my dad must have rushed me to the hospital ... I don't remember much about the hospital except I know that it is a massive, huge place. I was 5 years old at the time and I was like "oh my god I don't really want to go into this place, you know it's awful" ... but I had no choice. They did a blood test on me and found out that I had a low blood sugar. I think that was about it. But I can't remember the event particularly well. Probably because I was passed out quite a lot of the time."