



Dear Friends,

Someday (we dream) there won't be any news for the *FMSF Newsletter*, but as we approach the end of 2008, it's obvious that time has not yet arrived. Battles and skirmishes keep the "memory wars" alive in the courts, the popular media, and the activities of some professionals. There are examples of each in this newsletter.

We were taken aback this summer, for example, to learn that psychiatrist Colin Ross applied for the \$1 Million Prize from the James Randi Foundation. (p. 6) Ross claimed that he could send a beam of energy from his eyes that would cause a computer to make a sound. Unfortunately (for Dr. Ross) it was shown that the sound was triggered by the physical movement of his blinking.

The *FMSF newsletter* has had numerous stories in the past about Dr. Ross because of his support of recovered memories, multiple personalities, and various conspiracy theories, and because of lawsuits brought by some of his former patients for false memories. We must confess that Ross's latest enthusiasm made us laugh, but it also points out that the lack of a scientific approach underlies both what went wrong with his eye beam claims and what contributed mightily to the recovered memory phenomenon.

People have a natural tendency to try to confirm their beliefs, but in science, however, it is necessary to consider alternative explanations and test them. If Dr. Ross had simply placed some kind of obstruction to block the direction of his "eye beam," he would have noticed that the computer still made a sound—signaling that the beam could not be the cause of the sound. If Dr. Ross and the many other therapists who embraced recovered repressed-memory beliefs with such enthusiasm had considered alternative explanations rather than rushing to confirm their beliefs, we might have avoided the recovered-memory fiasco.

Are students preparing for a career in mental health being trained in a manner that will help avoid past pitfalls? We wish we could report that things look better for the

future. Unfortunately, it appears that clinical social workers, who comprise the largest number of mental health providers, are not receiving the necessary training. On page four, there is information about an article by Monica Pignotti who reports that the University of Michigan School of Social Work, often considered the most highly ranked social of social work in the country, had offered two-day courses in "power therapies" for which there is no scientific foundation. There is also information about a survey of mental health training programs in psychology, psychiatry and social work that is equally discouraging. Over 60 percent of clinical social work programs do not have a requirement for courses or supervision in evidence-based practice.

There are many therapists who would like nothing better than to have the FMS Foundation close its doors. All they need to do is show us that that time has arrived. When families stop calling with stories of accusations based on nothing more than claims of repressed memories recovered in therapy and when the programs that train future therapists ensure that they are providing a scientific basis for their courses, FMSF will no longer be needed.

Another fraudulent memoir, *Misha: A Mémoire of the Holocaust Years*, is further evidence of the misinformation still conveyed in the popular media. (p. 11) We learned only recently, in fact, that books that tell shocking stories of abuse, alcoholism, ruined childhoods and terrible traumas have an especially appropriate name in the publishing field: "misery memoirs." (p. 12) We had been unaware of the popularity of such books, which in England have accounted for eight percent of book sales in recent years. The sheer number of misery memoir hoaxes during the past 15-20 years

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The next newsletter will be sent in January 2009.

seems to speak of some need for people to say that survival alone is an achievement. The avid response of readers seems similar to the way that people respond to patients recounting stories of childhood abuse they discovered in therapy. "Surely no one would tell such a horrible story if it were not real." As long as the popular media continues to promote the notions of recovered memories, the memory wars will drag on and on and on.

FMSF Advisor August Piper, M.D. (p. 5) points out in a soon to be published paper that: "the Law has yet to definitively determine repressed memory's acceptability as a scientifically validated theory that can legitimately come before a jury." Until it does, attorneys and courts struggle with accusations of recovered memories of abuse in spite of the fact that science does not support repressed- and recovered-memory theory.

Although over the years most of the legal cases we have written in the newsletter are directly focused on issues of recovered memories, it is not unusual for some cases to have recovered memories lurking under other charges. In this issue we report on a legal case in which recovered memories resulted in a letter written by therapists that has been considered defamatory and malicious. (p. 9) In the most recent trial of one of the seven members of the Louisiana Hosanna Church who were charged with abuse, the "memories" that resulted in the trial appear to have been elicited not by a therapist but by a woman described as a cult leader. (p. 9)

The body of scientific papers looking at memory and false memories continues to grow at a rapid pace. (e.g., p. 10) A new British report about memory points to the importance of corroborating evidence and the need for experts in court cases to explain the nature of memory. (p. 3)

August Piper succinctly summarizes the situation:

"1. The concepts of repressed and recovered memory are not generally accepted in the psychological and psychiatric community; moreover, never since these notions first appeared in the literature have they won general acceptance by mental health professionals. To this day, dissociative amnesia, repression, repressed and recovered memory, and their kin remain extremely controversial among psychiatrists and psychologists.

2. The studies cited to support these concepts reveal significant flaws.

3. Much empirical evidence has been accumulated against the theory of repression.

4. The studies using the best methodology offer the least support for the repression hypothesis.

5. There is no evidence that recovered memories accurately reveal the specifics of long-ago events."

Pamela

Don't Miss It!

Try to Remember: Psychiatry's Clash Over Meaning, Memory, and Mind

Paul McHugh, M.D.,
Washington, DC: Dana Press
Publication: November, 2008

(From the jacket of the Uncorrected Reader's Proof.)

"This is the absorbing, never-before-told story of how a cult of Freudian psychiatrists, believers in such dingbat doctrines as 'multiple personality disorder,' 'dissociative identity disorder,' 'recovered memory,' and 'post-traumatic stress syndrome,' went on a witch hunt across America eerily similar to the Salem and medieval European witch hunts of yore, prodding patients, most of them young women, into fantasies of childhood sexual abuse that sent their parents off to prison for stretches as long as 20 years—before a small band of scientists risked their reputations and livelihoods to expose the cult for what it was: a wacky pack of quacks."

Tom Wolfe (author of *The Bonfire of the Vanities*)

One of our country's leading authorities on psychiatry tells the unforgettable story of how lives can be destroyed by faddish misdirections of thought and therapeutic practices. His first-hand account begins in the 1990s with his battle against the theory of "repressed sexual memories" and ends with his concern that excessive diagnosis of post traumatic stress disorder is today placing many patients in treatments that leave their real mental troubles untouched. A passionate advocate for the contribution of psychotherapy to healing, McHugh reaches out to patients, families, and mental health providers to explain how to work together toward effective diagnosis and treatment to win the contest for mental peace.

Paul R. McHugh, M.D. is the University Distinguished Service Professor of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He is the former director of the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and Psychiatrist-in-Chief at Johns Hopkins Hospital from 1975-2001. He is the author or co-author of five books, more than 200 professional papers, as well as articles for the public on psychiatry in the *Wall Street Journal*, *American Scholar*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and *Commentary*.

(Dr. McHugh is a member of the FMSF Scientific and Professional Advisory Board.)

British Report Urges Use of Memory Experts in Legal Cases

Conway, M.A., Chair. (2008, June). Guidelines on memory and the law: Recommendations from the scientific study of human memory. Report from the Research Board, British Psychological Society. Available at: <http://www.bps.org.uk/the-society/organisation-and-governance/research-board/steering-groups-and-working-parties/memory-and-the-law-working-party.cfm>

In July 2008, the British Psychological Society (BPS) released new guidelines on memory and the law that are based on the many advances that have been recently made in the scientific understanding of human memory. The Society hopes that the guidelines will provide police, attorneys, judges or others involved in legal proceedings with a rigorous understanding of memory and, thus, a firm basis on which to make decisions.

Memory researcher Martin Conway, Ph.D. was the Chair of the 15-member committee that wrote the report. In addition, there were 12 advisors, including Charles Brainerd, William Brewer, Gail Goodman, FMSF Advisor Elizabeth Loftus, and Valerie Reyna.

The 35-page report (plus 12 pages of bibliography) contains a one-page list of the ten key points in the report, followed by the points in greater detail, including the research on which they are based. The report does not discuss the recovered-memory debate, but the information contained is highly relevant to it. In an easily understandable and concise way, the report summarizes those aspects of memory on which there is agreement.

An important focus of the report is the many ways in which witness memories may be flawed and, as a consequence, the authors argue experts should be used in trials to help avoid wrongful convictions. They explain the need for experts as follows:

“The argument here is that as the jurors all have memories, they know

enough about memory from the experience of their own memories to make reliable evaluations of accounts put forward as memories. Thus, the argument goes, evaluating a memory is a ‘jury matter.’ If this were the case then there would be little need for the scientific study of memory and we would all simply know how our memories work, their limitations, properties, and failings. As it is so palpably clear that there is no such understanding, then relying on uninformed evaluations of memory can only lead to unreliable judgments. This report is intended to help by providing those who have to make such judgments in criminal and civil proceedings with straightforward accounts of scientific findings and thinking about the nature of memory and memories.” Page 4

The report goes into some detail about who should be considered a memory expert: “someone whose expertise is recognized by their peers, i.e. other memory researchers.” The report is specific about what does *not* constitute evidence of expertise in memory.

- Being a member of a professional society or societies, no matter how exalted, does not of itself make a person a memory expert.
- Teaching a course or several courses on memory at university or elsewhere also does not of itself ensure the required level of expertise.
- Having acted as a memory expert witness in the past doesn’t make a person a memory expert.
- Listening, evaluating, interpreting, or advising on accounts of memories as part of one’s professional activities does not of itself necessarily make a person a memory expert.
- Working in a forensic area does not confer memory expertise.

The sections about children’s memory development are concise and informative. For example:

“The period from birth to five years is characterized by rapid neurological development, especially to

those areas of the brain that in adulthood will control learning and memory. At the same time there is equally rapid acquisition of language, concepts and understanding of the world, including social interaction. It is important to note that infants and young children have yet to acquire many of the concepts familiar to adults, including complex emotions such as guilt, embarrassment, and shame. It would therefore not be possible for a child younger than five years who lacked, for example, the concept of “embarrassment” to have an original memory that contained features labeled by the term, although this might of course be added later in adulthood, perhaps for purposes of “presenting” a memory.” Page 14

“Most people remember little or nothing below the period of three years of age, a period which is known as the period of *childhood amnesia*. A few memories can typically be recalled from when the individual was aged 3-5 years, and more aged 5-7 years. However, it is not until the period of eight years or older that many memories can be recalled. And it is not until the age of about eight to 10 years that memories begin to feature the more typical structure, content and organization of adult memories.” Page 13

This report is an extremely useful addition to the tools now available to help attorneys and judges.

Although the few legal citations are British, the explanations of memory are applicable anywhere. We highly recommend reading this report, especially as it is available on the web.

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“Without corroborating evidence, witness testimony based on memory should not be relied on. In many legal cases, memory may feature as the main or only source of evidence, and it is nearly always critical”

Martin Conway

One Reason the Memory Wars Don't Go Away

Pignotti, M. (2007). Questionable interventions taught at top-ranked school of socialwork. *Scientific Review of Mental Health Practice* 5(2), 78-79.

In this short article Monica Pignotti points out that the University of Michigan School of Social Work, long ranked the number one social work program in the nation,^[1] offered a two-day course in “power therapies”—techniques for which there is no scientific foundation. The 2006 course presented information about Emotional Freedom Technique, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, Tapas Acupressure Technique, and Traumatic Incident Reduction. The course description noted, “These approaches (EFT, EMDR, TAT, and TIR) have been developed to work with clients who are struggling with the consequences of traumatic events.” The course description claimed, “These various models are time-limited, supported by empirically based efficacy studies.” With one exception, according to Pignotti, the claimed supporting references were flawed studies that had not been published in refereed journals. Pignotti describes the supporting research that was referenced for each of the techniques, explaining the flaws. Pignotti concludes:

“These courses, along with recent empirical evidence (Weissman et al., 2006) that 61.7% of clinical social work programs do not have a requirement for courses or supervision in evidence-based practice, indicate that the social work profession has a long way to go when it comes to implementing evidence-based practice into their graduate school curricula. Given that clinical social workers comprise the largest number of mental health providers in the United States (Weissman et al., 2006), the content and quality of their training should be of utmost concern to all in the mental health professions who value a more scientific approach to clinical practice.” (p. 79)

1. U.S. World Report (2008). See: http://education.yahoo.com/college/essentials/school_rankings/grad/grad_health_rankings.html

2. Weissman, M.M., Verdelli, H., Gameroff, M.J., Bledsoe, S.E., Betts, K., Mufson, L., Fitterling, H., Wickramaratne, P. (2006). National survey of psychotherapy training in psychiatry, psychology, and social work. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 63, 925-934.

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Another Reason the Memory Wars Don't Go Away: Survey of Psychotherapy Training

Weissman, M.M., Verdelli, H., Gameroff, M.J., Bledsoe, S.E., Betts, K., Mufson, L., Fitterling, H., Wickramaratne, P. (2006). National survey of psychotherapy training in psychiatry, psychology, and social work. *Archives of Gen.Psychiatry*, 63, 925-934.

Does the three percent of the population in the United States that receives psychotherapy each year get evidence-based treatment? Sadly, this study shows that few practitioners base their practice in therapies that have been shown to be effective in controlled clinical trials with random assignment. The authors of this survey sought to determine if programs in psychiatry, psychology (Ph.D. and Psy.D.) and social work were training their students in evidence-based treatments.

The results showed that “more than 90% of psychiatry training programs were complying with the new cognitive behavior therapy requirement. However the 2 disciplines with the most students, professional clinical psychology (Psy.D.) and social work, “had the largest percentage of programs (67.3% and 61.7%, respectively) that did not require a didactic training in any evidence-based therapies.

The authors make the following conclusion:

“There is a considerable gap between research evidence for psychotherapy and clinical training. Until the training programs in the major disciplines providing psychotherapy increase training in evidence based

therapies, the gap between research evidence and clinical practice will remain.”

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Why Would Someone Confess to A Crime He Did Not Commit?

Kassin, S.M. (2008). False confessions: Causes, consequences, and implications for reform. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 17(4), 249-253.

Why would people say they had been abused if it were not true? Why would people confess to a crime if they had not done it? We know that these things happen, but it is difficult for most people to really understand such behavior. We know that 20 to 25% of the exonerations that have taken place with DNA evidence have involved people who had confessed to a crime that they did not commit.

Although FMSF families do seem to gain understanding of the reasons that someone can come to believe in abuse that never happened, many feel that it is difficult to explain to others who have not been falsely accused. Even for FMSF families, it is often difficult to understand how a person could confess to a crime that he or she did not commit. Of particular concern is the fact that jurors do not discount confessions even when they are shown evidence that the confessions have been coerced.

Some people make voluntary false confessions. They do this with no prompting from police, most often in high-profile cases such as John Mark Karr who confessed to the murder of JonBenet Ramsey in 2006. Kassin says that there are several reasons why someone might make such a false confession: “a pathological need for attention or self-punishment, feelings of guilt or delusions, the perception of tangible gain, or the desire to protect someone else.”

This new paper, however, is focused on false confessions that are a consequence of police interrogations. Confessions made in highly coercive

environments may be a consequence of someone who wants to “escape from a stressful situation, avoid punishment, or gain a promised or implied reward.” Sometimes some vulnerable people who are put in highly suggestive interrogations not only confess but also actually come to believe that they committed the crime in question.

Kassin examines why innocent people are interrogated in the first place, noting that research from around the world had shown that “people are only about 54% accurate in judging truth and deception” and that training does not seem to help. In other words, law enforcement is not especially skillful at differentiating guilty and innocent suspects.

The author describes research that has shown that some people are at greater risk for making false confessions. People who are more compliant in social situations, people who are highly anxious, fearful, depressed, delusional, mentally retarded or young are all vulnerable. The author notes that being innocent actually puts a person at risk. “People who stand falsely accused believe that truth and justice will prevail and that their innocence is transparent to others. As a result, they cooperate with police, waive their rights, and speak freely, often not realizing that they are under suspicion.”

A major problem with false confessions is that people accept confessions at face value. Even when jurors learn that a confession has been forced and is beyond doubt false, they still tend to make decisions as if the confession were unquestioned.

Kassin concludes by noting that a number of problems with false confessions have been identified. He suggests two ways to help solve these problems. 1) there should be “a greater use of expert witnesses to educate judges and juries about the psychology of confessions.” 2) police should be required to videotape entire interrogations.

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What’s Wrong with Believing in Repression?

Piper, A., Lillevik, L., & Kritzer, R. (2008). What’s wrong with believing in repression? A review for legal professionals. *To appear: Psychology, Public Policy, and Law.*

Does scientific evidence support the idea that people commonly become unable to remember harrowing events, and then, after a period of amnesia, “recover” the memory? That is the question at the focus of this paper by psychiatrist August Piper, attorney Linda Lillevik, and third-year law student Roxanne Kritzer. Cases involving these notions continue to move through the courts. Therefore, the authors argue, there is a real need for judges and attorneys to understand the research findings showing that the science does *not* support the theory of repressed- and recovered-memory. Piper, Lillevik, and Kritzer believe some courts have tarnished their credibility by giving “credence to pseudoscience” in decisions accepting the theory of repressed memory.

The authors examine the literature, especially those papers published since the 1999 Faigman, Kaye, Saks, and Sanders review that was critical of repressed and recovered memories. The present paper also looks at legal decisions reached since 1999, which was the period after the Piper, Pope and Borowiecki (2000) review of US appellate-level decisions in recovered-memory cases. The 2000 review found that:

“Before about 1999, most courts refused to recognize the validity of repression, either to justify tolling a statute of limitations, or as a scientifically validated theory that can legitimately be presented to a jury. They also found that in the great majority of appellate-level decisions, the courts refused to accept, either explicitly or implicitly, the validity of repressed and recovered memory. Moreover, when state Supreme Courts required evidentiary hearings on these con-

cepts, *in every case* they were rejected.”

Since 1999, recovered-memory cases have continued to be filed, and states’ decisions have varied. Although Courts continue to evaluate the acceptance and validity of repressed-memory theory, as of 2008, “the Law has yet to definitively determine repressed memory’s acceptability as a scientifically validated theory that can legitimately come before a jury.”

This concise paper is in five sections as follows:

1. The concepts of repressed and recovered memory are not generally accepted in the psychological and psychiatric community; moreover, never since these notions first appeared in the literature have they won general acceptance by mental health professionals. To this day, dissociative amnesia, repression, repressed and recovered memory, and their kin remain extremely controversial among psychiatrists and psychologists.

2. The studies cited to support these concepts reveal significant flaws.

3. Much empirical evidence has been accumulated against the theory of repression.

4. The studies using the best methodology offer the least support for the repression hypothesis.

5. There is no evidence that recovered memories accurately reveal the specifics of long-ago events.

In summary, science does not support repressed- and recovered-memory theory.

Faigman, D.L., Kaye, D. H., Saks, M. J., & Sanders, J., eds. (1999). *Modern Scientific Evidence: the Law and Science of Expert Testimony. Volume I, Pocket Part.* St. Paul (MIN): West Group, pp. 115-155.
Piper, A., Jr., Pope, H. G., Jr., & Borowiecki, J. J., (2000). Custer’s last stand: Brown, Schefflin, and Whitfield’s latest attempt to salvage “dissociative amnesia.” *Journal of Psychiatry & Law*, 28, 149-213.

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What was hard to bear is sweet to remember. Spanish proverb

Preliminary Test of Psychiatrist Colin Ross's "Eye Beam Energy" Sends Him

Back to the Drawing Board

On July 30, 2008, a press release with the following headline started its spread across the internet.

"Dallas Psychiatrist's Paranormal Abilities to Be Tested by Noted Debunker James Randi. Dr. Colin Ross Can Send a Beam of Energy From His Eyes; Aims for \$1 Million Prize." [1]

The release explained that Ross could make a tone sound out of a speaker using nothing but an energy beam that he sent out through his eyes. He told Dallas author Daniel Rodrique that "with the aid of special goggles he's assembled using a blue Aqua Sphere swim mask, electrical wiring and...scraps of tin foil, he can harness the energy from his eyes and use the energy to play a tone on a computer." A photo of Dr. Ross and a demonstration of his apparatus appeared the next day on *The Dallas Observer Blog*. [2]

Dr. Ross is familiar to many *Newsletter* readers because of his promotion of the beliefs of recovered memories and multiple personality disorder. He is a former president of the International Society for the Study of Multiple Personality Disorder and Dissociation and was featured in a highly critical 1993 documentary produced by the Fifth Estate on CBC. [3] At least two former patients claimed to have developed false memories during treatment with him and have brought lawsuits against Dr. Ross. [4]

As described on its website, [5] the purpose of the James Randi Educational Foundation (JREF) is to provide reliable information about paranormal claims. The Foundation has offered a one-million dollar prize to anyone who can show evidence of any paranormal, supernatural, or occult power or event – under proper observing conditions. All tests are designed with the participation and approval of

the applicant. In most cases, the applicant will be asked to perform a relatively simple preliminary test of the claim. These tests usually conducted by associates of the JREF. To date no one has passed the preliminary testing process.

The Colin Ross claim that he can send a beam of energy from his eyes is on hold for further testing at this time. James Randi asked Yale University School of Medicine faculty member Steven Novella, MD to help with the preliminary testing. In an August 20 podcast, Dr. Novella explained what happened during the testing. He said that most people make a fairly shoddy connection between cause and effect and that this was the problem with the Ross claim. [6] Novella said that Ross was using Electroencephalography (EEG) electrodes and software in conjunction with the glasses he designed. [7]. Novella said that he had done extensive research involving EEG and he knew that there is a known EEG effect, an artifact of eye blinking. Dr. Novella noticed that Ross's blinks and the sound were associated. It was the eye movement that was causing the sound. When this association was pointed out to him, Ross said that he would do more work to eliminate the artifact.

Perhaps Ross could have saved himself some embarrassment if he had been more familiar with the scientific process and had conducted a few tests of his own. Dr. Novella pointed out that if Ross had taken the simple step of placing some kind of barrier to break the beam, he would have discovered that the computer still made a sound and that this would have informed Ross that it was not the beam from his eyes that was the cause of the sound.

If Ross had done a bit more research in the literature, he might have avoided the awkward situation that emerged. For example, in 2002, the flagship publication of the

American Psychological Association, the *American Psychologist* published an article entitled "Fundamentally Misunderstanding Visual Perception: Adults' Belief in Visual Emissions." [8] The article summarizes a tremendous amount of the research in the area and points out how traditional education has failed to overcome the misconception that the eyes emit energy. Ross is clearly a victim of that misconception.

1. Keeney, D. (2008, July 30). Press Release. Retrieved on 8/3/2008 from MarketWire at <http://www.marketwatch.com/news/story/dallas-psychiatrists-paranormal-abilities-tested/story.aspx?guid={23087684-4B13-41B5-8B3C-16A915682834}&dist=hppr>
2. Rodrigue, D. (2008, August 1). Colin Ross has an eyebeam of energy he'd like you to hear. Retrieved from The Dallas Observer Blog on 8/10/08 from http://blogs.dallasobserver.com/unfairpark/2008/08/colin_ross_has_an_eyebeam_of_e.php
3. Woods, T. (Producer) (1993, November 9). Mistaken identities. *Fifth Estate*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
4. *Tyo v. Ash, et al and Colin Ross*, District Court, Dallas Co., Texas, No. DV98-3843 *Hart v. Ross*, Manitoba Court of Queen's Bench, File No. CI-94-01-79802
5. <http://www.randi.org>
6. Novella, S. (2008, August 20). Special report: JREF Psychic challenge report. Retrieved on 8/25/08 from Skeptics Guide to the Universe Podcast #161 at <http://www.theskepticsguide.org/>
7. An electroencephalogram (EEG) is a test that measures and records the electrical activity of your brain. Special sensors (**electrodes**) are attached to your head and hooked by wires to a computer. The computer records your brain's electrical activity on the screen or on paper as wavy lines.
8. Winer, G.A., Cottrell, J.E., Gregg, V., Fournier, J.S., Bica, L.A. (2002, June/July). Fundamentally misunderstanding visual perception: Adults' belief in visual emissions. *American Psychologist*, 57 (6/7), 417-424.



'I have done that,' says my memory. 'I cannot have done that'— says my pride, and remains adamant. At last— memory yields.'

"The advantage of a bad memory is that one enjoys several times the same good things for the first time."

Friedrich Nietzsche

Memory Conformity: What Happens When People Talk About What Happened?

French, L., Garry, M., Mori, K. (2008). You say tomato? Collaborative remembering leads to more false memories for intimate couples than for strangers.

Memory, 16(3), 262-273.

People who observe the same event often recall different aspects of it. French et al. note: “We do not take in everything we see; we rarely remember everything we take in; and we often cannot describe everything we have remembered. Furthermore, memory is often goal driven, so that people frequently talk about events in a way that reflects their goals, rather than accurately reflecting their memory.” What happens when two people talk about an event they have both seen? *Does it matter whether we talk about an event with a stranger or a romantic partner?* That is the question that French and colleagues sought to answer.

Previous research has shown that when people see slightly different versions of an event and then talk about it together, they later remember seeing things that their partner mentioned which they themselves had never seen. This finding is of concern in legal situations in which witnesses may talk to each other. Indeed, French et al. report that a recent Australian survey confirms that 86% of witnesses to significant events such as a crime or accident reported that they discussed the event with another witness.

The researchers observed that there was no information about the relationship between the witnesses who spoke to each other. They wanted to learn whether romantic partners would influence each other’s memories more than strangers. Studying romantic partners is a way to look at the effects of social factors based on familiarity, trust and respect. There is evidence from research in social psychology to predict that people might

consider that a romantic partner was more credible than a stranger.

There were sixty-four participants in the study, 16 romantic couples and 16 pairs of strangers. The pairs watched slightly different versions of a movie and then discussed some details from the movie but not others. Later, the participants were more accurate at remembering non-discussed details than they were the discussed details because they incorrectly reported information from their partners. The participants who discussed events with a romantic partner were far more likely to report false memories.

The researchers discussed the benefits that could come to memory when people discussed events, pointing out that they had examined *misinformation*. It’s entirely possible that under certain circumstances someone could become more correct about what happened during an event by talking to another person. The problem is that in court cases there are often multiple witnesses who know each other and have opportunity to talk together. They may develop very consistent stories as a result of conversations and this very consistency—whether an accurate account of the events or not—may boost their confidence. Jurors may be swayed by confidence and consistency.

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Update From Norway: University of Oslo Awards Elizabeth Loftus an Honorary Doctorate

Mona Hide Klausen

In early September 2008, the University of Oslo awarded an honorary doctorate to FMS Foundation Scientific Advisor, Elizabeth Loftus, Distinguished Professor of Social Ecology at the University of California Irvine, for her achievements in the study of memory – specifically the malleable nature of the human mind. The University of Oslo grants honorary doctorates in recognition of out-

standing work furthering the scientific endeavor. Loftus has previously received five other honorary degrees.^[1]

Hundreds of faculty, students, law enforcement officers, and clinicians attended “Illusions of Memory,” a three-hour lecture given by Dr. Loftus. It was an inspiring talk because Dr. Loftus is so passionate about her work—even after so many years. It goes without saying that the research is also fascinating.

I hope that people paid attention to her lecture because the recovered memory movement appears to be alive and well in Norway. In fact, a faculty member at the university recently published an article describing one of her patients who had five alters. In an effort to draw more attention to the problems of recovered memories, the Psychological Student Network has organized a “theme week” about false memories in the week following the presentation to Dr. Loftus.

1. 1982 from Miami University (Ohio); 1990 from Leiden University in the Netherlands; 1994 from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York; 1998 University of Portsmouth in England; 2005 University of Haifa in Israel.

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Memory Book Evokes Memories of Height of the Memory Wars

Estrade, P. (2008). *You are what you remember: A pathbreaking guide to understanding and interpreting your childhood memories*. Philadelphia, PA: Perseus Books Group. (This book was translated from the 2006 French edition published by Robert Laffont)

Patrick Estrade is a French psychologist and psychotherapist whose newest pop psychology book has recently been translated into English. It is doubtful that FMSF Newsletter readers will find much to favor in this book, even though the author does, in places, have some correct information about memory. Unfortunately, the problems of the book outweigh the good points.

For example, on page 132 he writes: “When we’re dealing with memories, the ‘truth’ is unimportant.” On pages 148-150 in a section called “Memory, sexual abuse and incest,” he promotes the book *Toxic Parents*, by Susan Forward. He says the book offers a “particularly effective technique to help heal from the “incest wound.” The technique is to write a letter to the aggressor and should have four parts:

- This is what you did to me.
 - This is how I felt then.
 - This is the effect it’s had on my life.
 - ^a This is what I expect from you now.
- Need more be said?

Forward, S. (1989). *Toxic Parents: Overcoming their hurtful legacy and reclaiming your life*. New York: Bantam Books.



“Every second of every day we are besieged by trillions of bits of sensory data. Most of it simply bypasses the memory banks and heads straight for the great sea of oblivion. If it didn’t our heads would soon bulge out to one side and then burst.

Apparently the short-term memory, even when in mid-season form, can only hand on to about half a dozen separate bits of stuff.

Permanently excluded from that half dozen are the name of the person you’ve just been introduced to and where you put your glasses. But at least the short-term memory is honest. What little it hangs on to is by and large true.

The long-term memory is a lot more capacious but a lot less honest. It works like a Marxist historian. It revises the past.”

Bennett, J. (2008, September 10).

When truth gives up the ghost. *Dominion Post*. Retrieved on 9/11/08.

Father MacRae

A Reminder That There Are Still Many People in Prison Based Only on Accusations of Recovered Memories

Although there is no doubt of the Catholic Church’s irresponsible handling of thousands of reports of clergy abuse, there are also a growing number of cases in which priests appear to have been wrongly convicted. The case of Rev. Gordon MacRae, which was detailed by Dorothy Rabinowitz in 2005 in the *Wall Street Journal*,^[1] appears to be one of them.

In May 1993, Rev. Gordon MacRae was arrested for sexually assaulting three New Hampshire boys when he had been a priest there a decade earlier. The early 1990s were heydays for accusations of sexual abuse based on new-found memories and just about everything that could go wrong for the defense did go wrong. Among the problems was a letter from Florida informing local police that MacRae was a suspect in a murder/sex crime there. This was the final bit of tinder for a hyper-zealous detective who then repeatedly interviewed many young people who knew MacRae and even attempted a series of “stings.” By the time that the Florida case was declared bogus, there was no stopping the effort to convict MacRae.

Prosecutors offered various plea arrangements to MacRae, who is serving a life term, but he refused them all, declaring his innocence. Indeed, Fr. MacRae would have been released after one to three years if he had taken a plea or would have been released on parole if he confessed. (The “Catch-22” of prison is that those who do not admit guilt will not receive parole.)

At the criminal trial, witness Thomas Grover’s testimony verged on the bizarre. He had accused MacRae of abusing him during counseling sessions. When asked why he continued to go to the sessions, Grover explained that he had ‘out of body’ experiences and completely forgot between ses-

sions that he had ever been sodomized.

Even the judge’s rulings appeared biased. According to Rabinowitz:

“Throughout his testimony, [accuser] Thomas Grover repeatedly railed at the priest for forcing him to endure the torments of a trial. He would not have much to fear, in the end, in these proceedings, whose presiding judge, Arthur D. Brennan, refused to allow into evidence Thomas Grover’s long juvenile history of theft, assault, forgery and drug offenses. In New Hampshire, where juries need only find the accuser credible in sex abuse cases, with no proofs required, this was no insignificant restriction. The judge also took it upon himself to instruct jurors to “disregard inconsistencies in Mr. Grover’s testimony,” and said that they should not think him dishonest because of his failure to answer questions. The jury had much to disregard.”

To read more about this case: www.gordonmacrae.net

1. Rabinowitz, D. (2005, April 27). A priest’s story: Not all accounts of sex abuse in the Catholic Church turn out to be true. *Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved on 4/30/05 from <http://www.opinionjournal.com/extra/?id=110006630>.



“Our memories are card indexes consulted and then returned in disorder by authorities whom we do not control.”

Cyril Connolly

“If memory is the diary we carry about, then it is likely to include truths, halftruths, gaps and falsities.”

“Like true memories, false memories can be held with great confidence, can be detailed, can be vivid, can have behavioral consequences, and can even be emotionally rich. But the fact that a particular memory is confidently held, detailed, vivid, consequential or emotional, or even all of these, cannot guarantee that the memory is real”

Wade, K.A. & Laney, C. (2008). Time to rewrite your autobiography? *The Psychologist*, 21 (7), 588-592

Grandparents Obtain Confidential Medical Records

In August, 2008, grandparents Josephine A. and Lucian C. Parlato, of Amherst, New York, finally succeeded in winning a court order compelling Maria T. Cartagena, M.D. a local psychiatrist, and James A. Brigante, CSW-R, a social worker, to turn over to them the medical records pertaining to the care and treatment of Josephine's daughter, Jodi M. Gburek. The Parlatos originally asked the New York State Supreme Court, Erie County, for such "discovery" as far back as September 2005.

Lucian C. Parlato, who is an attorney and has been representing his wife and himself in legal proceedings in several New York courts going back to March 2002, said that the medical records prove that Dr. Cartagena and Mr. Brigante deliberately fabricated a lurid tale of childhood sexual abuse in order to abet Jodi Gburek's effort to prevent the grandparents from seeing her son Shane.

From his birth in 1991, Shane lived in his grandparents' Amherst, New York residence for six years while his mother coped with a bad marriage and other problems. Before Jodi moved to Florida in 1993 for six months, she went to court to have the grandparents appointed as custodians of her infant son.

In 1998, Jodi remarried, and she moved to her new home near the Parlatos' in Amherst. Shane, however, continued to enjoy liberal visitation with his grandparents, who played an active and loving role in his life until September 2001. At that time, Jodi Gburek, who had been a patient for some time of Dr. Cartagena and therapist James Brigante for treatment of depression and anxiety, abruptly cut off all visitation.

After six months of attempting to discover the reasons for the termination of visitation, the Parlatos sued Jodi Gburek in Erie County Family Court.

At that point, Jodi exhibited a letter written by therapist Brigante on March 8, 2002 alleging that she had been sexually molested as a child by Josephine Parlato and had only recently recovered memory of such events. The Family Court judge gave the Parlatos "supervised therapeutic visitation" with a licensed psychologist, which never worked out in practice. As a result, the Parlatos have not been able to see their grandson for seven years.

In February 2003, the Parlatos brought a libel action in New York Supreme Court against Jodi Gburek and her husband, plus Dr. Cartagena and Mr. Brigante, complaining that the 2002 letter written by Mr. Brigante and endorsed by Dr. Cartagena in March 2002, was defamatory and malicious. In March, 2007, after several exasperating delays, the

Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court sitting in Rochester, New York, dismissed the Parlatos' complaint against Dr. Cartagena and Mr. Brigante, but confirmed their right to sue the Gburek's. [1]

At the present time, the Parlatos, undaunted by long delays and stiff opposition, are preparing for a jury trial against Jodi Gburek and her husband. Moreover, according to Lucian Parlato, he and his wife have not given up on their fight against Jodi Gburek's professional caretakers. They have served subpoenas on Cartagena and Brigante commanding them to answer questions concerning the false allegations made against them and their role in the scheme to squelch visitation. They are further planning to initiate disciplinary proceedings in appropriate New York State departments against Cartagena and Brigante for their unprofessional and unethical conduct.

1. 831 New York Supplement 2nd at page 805.



Lamonica Found Guilty of Rape in Ponchatoula, Louisiana Hosanna Church Trial

Louisiana v. Lamonica, 2008-KK-2044, 21st Judicial District Court, Parish of Tangipahoa, Louisiana.

On September 5, 2008, a jury found Louis Lamonica, 49, guilty of four counts of aggravated rape against his two sons when they were young. Lamonica, the former pastor of the Hosanna Church, is to be sentenced on October 21 and faces a mandatory life in prison without parole.

Lamonica is the second of the seven members of the Hosanna Church in Ponchatoula who were indicted in 2005 of child abuse that allegedly took place, sometimes with satanic rituals, at the church. The first co-defendant, a youth minister at the church, Austin "Trey" Bernard, III was convicted in December 2007 and is serving a life sentence. [1]

Ponchatoula is a small, rural town halfway between New Orleans and Baton Rouge situated on the northwest rim of Lake Pontchartrain. The Assemblies of God Hosanna Church was started in 1975. It thrived, growing to a congregation of almost 1,000, until the 1984 death of the founder, Louis Lamonica's father (also named Louis Lamonica). After a series of interim pastors, the church passed on to Lamonica in 1993. Parishioners, however, left the church in droves and at some point the church lost its Assemblies of God affiliation. There was no oversight.

The history of the Hosanna Church is relevant because Lamonica's defense argued that he had confessed to crimes he had not committed because he was under the sway of Lois Mowbray. [8] According to trial testimony, a parishioner named Lois Mowbray became Hosanna's associate pastor soon after Lamonica took over the church. Mowbray seems to have been responsible for the fact that Sunday worship sermons were replaced by many hours of praising

God and altar calls in which Mowbray told one of the congregants that he or she had to confess to a sin (about which Mowbray had learned from God). Mowbray kept a 586-page journal in which other parishioners were supposed to write out confessions to sex acts. [2] According to trial testimony, Mowbray taught the “concept of spiritual thought, where lusting after a person was the same as physically having sex.” [3] Mowbray taught that if a person thought about a sin, it was the same as if the person had done it and the person had to confess it.

Mowbray insisted that Lamonica’s sons write about abuse in her book. When one son refused, Mowbray had his mother lock him in his room and destroy all his belongings. He finally broke down and said he had been abused.

According to his attorney, Lamonica refused to respond to the altar call to confess. This caused Mowbray to make a concerted effort to get him to change. She persuaded Lamonica’s wife to force him to leave his home and to live in the church. He had to work for \$10. a day at an electrical company that Mowbray and some other church members owned, and he also had to clean the church. Other church members humiliated and beat him.

One detective actually referred to Mowbray as the leader of the church and suggested that there was much infighting among the congregation of 15. [4] Under the leadership of Lamonica and then Mowbray, the congregation dwindled to 10 or 15 people. Worship consisted of prophetically inspired public confessions and vomiting in order to cast out demons of sin. One witness stated: “The worship team would crowd around them and pray over them. This would make them start to throw up.” [4] By the time the church closed in 2003, it had become a cult. One person testified that toward the end, strangers who might come to ser-

vice were turned away at the door. The church members had virtually no contact with anyone outside the church.

Authorities first learned about the Hosanna church abuse accusations in April 2005 when Nicole Bernard, wife of the youth minister at the church, telephoned the Ponchatoula Sheriff’s Office to say that her daughter had been abused from infancy until she was three by Louis Lamonica. The very next day, Lamonica walked into the sheriff’s office and described sexual offenses at the church which included his abusing children for the past five or six years. The detective with whom he spoke said that Lamonica was not confessing but trying to be helpful. “He didn’t come to turn himself in, he came to talk with us.” [5] Lamonica, however, was immediately arrested. Lamonica testified that Mowbray told him that she had made a deal with the Sheriff’s Office that he would not be arrested if he told about the abuse and satanic child-sex ring.

After the revelations by Lamonica, investigators used digging equipment and cadaver dogs to search the grounds of the church. They apparently hired Dawn Perlmutter, Ph.D. to help them in their search for evidence of satanic cult activity, but no evidence was ever found. After the expansive publicity about satanic activity, those charges were dropped. Authorities did find

“Naturally, we found it strange for someone to confess to anything without being asked, but he came in and admitted to some sexual acts with persons under age and to sex with animals. We couldn’t very well let him go, and from there everything came to a domino effect.”

Detective Supervisor
Stan Carpenter.

Quoted in Grinberg, E. (2005, August 3). Claims of brainwashing, child abuse and a cult-like sex ring to be aired in court. Court TV. Retrieved on 9/8/08 from http://www.courtstv.com/trials/news/0705/29_bernard_ctv.html

hundred of pages of diaries written by both Lamonica and the boys that described abuse.

In addition to the confession that Lamonica made to authorities, the prosecution also presented testimony from four mental-health professionals to whom his sons, now 18 and 22, had spoken of the abuse in spring of 2005. In late 2005, however, both boys retracted their abuse stories. They told the jury that they had never been abused and said that their confessions were the result of Lois Mowbray’s control. Mowbray had directed their mother to make the boys write down incidents of abuse. Mowbray and the mother would suggest topics to the boys and they were supposed to fill in the details. The prosecution’s experts discounted the retractions.

One of the children’s therapists said that his symptoms of Tourette’s Syndrome [6] got worse after he confessed. The doctor who treated the Tourette’s said that even though the boys had been threatened which prompted their original confessions “The story was being told in a consistent way in words that were consistent with their own development level.” A doctor who had found no physical evidence of any abuse said that both false and true recantations are not unusual in child abuse cases. A child might recant because he or she did not want the parent to be arrested. [7]

The defense had planned to have an expert testify about how to judge the veracity of abuse allegations made by children. The judge did not allow this testimony saying that such testimony was inadmissible under Louisiana state Supreme Court precedent because it is the jury and not the expert who determines the truth of witness testimony.

The prosecution asked Lamonica why he suffered the humiliation and made the confession. They wondered why he did not leave the cult. Lamonica said that he confessed

because he had come to believe that it was the only way in which he could hold his family together. There appeared to be no explanation for why Lamonica did not leave the church.

Assistant District Attorney Don Wall prosecuted the Lamonica case. The defense attorney was Michael Thiel who also defended Austin Bernard, III. State District Judge was Zoey Waguespack presided. It appears that the next person to be tried will be Paul Fontenot, a member of the Hosanna Church.

Reporter Debra Lemoine has covered the Hosanna Church case for the *Baton Rouge Advocate*. The articles can be found on the paper's web site.

<http://www.2theadvocate.com/search?search-database=Advocate&searchKeywords=lamonica&searchsection=>

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2. Grinberg, E. (2005, August 3). Claims of brainwashing, child abuse and a cult-like sex ring to be aired in court. *CourtTVNews*. Retrieved on 9/8/08 from http://www.courttv.com/trials/news/0705/29_bernard_ctv.html
3. Lemoine, D. (2008, September 1). Pastor's trial may resume this week. *2theadvocate.com*. Retrieved on 9/9/08 from <http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/27748934.html>
4. Lemoine, D. (2008, August 29). Hosanna church rites described as cultlike. *2theadvocate.com*. Retrieved on 9/9/08 from <http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/27646729.html>
5. Lyman, R. (2005, May 25). Sex charges follow a church's collapse. *New York Times*. Retrieved on 12/5/07 from <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/25/national/25church.html?>
6. Tourette's syndrome (TS) is a neurological disorder characterized by repetitive, stereotyped, involuntary movements and vocalizations called tics. Tics are often worse with excitement or anxiety and better during calm, focused activities.
7. Lemoine, D. (2008, August 27). Experts testify on abuse. *2theadvocate.com*. Retrieved on 9/9/08 from <http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/27516669.html>
8. Lemoine, D. (2008, August 30). Ex-Hosanna pastor: Confession forced. Retrieved on 9/9/08 from <http://www.2theadvocate.com/news/27687024.html?showAll=y&c=y>



Seeing What Is Not There: Memory Alone Is Not Reliable Enough to Form Basis of Legal Decisions

Ost, J. (2008, September 9). Recovering memories that never were. Talk presented at the British Association for the Advancement of Science Festival of Science, Liverpool, Sept. 6-11, 2008.

In 2005, University of Portsmouth psychologist James Ost studied 300 people's memories of the July bombings in the subway and on a bus in London. The results showed that 40% of the people claimed that they had seen the bus explode on television. The problem is that no television footage of that explosion ever existed. The research was presented at a science conference in Liverpool.

Dr. Ost found that the people who developed false memories were significantly more fantasy-prone and creative. They had better imaginative abilities than those who did not claim to have seen the explosion on television. He said that the results of this study supported his previous research that showed that some people reported having seen video footage of the moment when Princess Diana's car crashed. There was no such footage of that tragedy.

"Taken as a whole this is further evidence that our memories are not perfect. They are not like a videotape you can rewind and replay for perfect recall. Because of this, memory alone is not reliable enough to form the basis of legal decisions. We find some people are susceptible to fantasy; they are highly prone to believe they have witnessed something they cannot possibly have seen. They have fooled themselves into believing they saw things."

Randerson, J. (2008, September 10). Study shows how false memories rerun 7/7 film that never existed. *The Guardian*. Retrieved on 9/15/2008 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2008/sep/10/humanbehaviour.july7>.

Does a Fraudulent Memoir Toll the Statute of Limitations in Massachusetts? Another Memoir Shown to Be False

In February, 2008, Misha Defonseca confessed that her 1997 Holocaust survival memoir, *Misha: A Mémoire of the Holocaust Years* was not true. She made this acknowledgment only after a genealogical researcher discovered the author's true identity as Monique De Wael. The researcher posted Defonseca/De Wael's Belgium baptismal certificate and elementary school attendance documents on the web, thus documenting that the events in the book could not have happened as described.

Indeed, the memoir has strained credulity ever since it first appeared, but until this year no one had been able to prove that it was false. The preposterous story told how a young Jewish Misha escaped the Nazis by surviving in the forest. She claimed that she trekked thousands of miles, lived with a pack of wolves, and, at one point, killed a German soldier in self-defense—all this when she was alleged between the ages of 7 and 11. Although it sold only 5,000 copies in the United States, the book was translated into 18 languages, was a best seller in Europe, was the subject of an Italian opera, and was the basis of a recent French movie. The book features blurbs from Elie Wiesel and from the head of the North American Wolf Foundation.

In 2001, Defonseca and her ghostwriter won a \$10.8 million jury award against her United States publisher that the judge later tripled to \$32.4 million. The jury found that the publisher had failed to promote the book in the United States and had also hidden profits. The authors later settled for far less from Mt. Ivy Press, the small publisher (\$425,000 to Defonseca and \$250,000 to the ghostwriter).

This year, after it became known that the book was a fake, the Mt. Ivy

Press attempted to have the 2001 verdict overturned, arguing that the statute of limitations on an appeal should not apply because the jury sided with Defonseca, believing that her story was true. Massachusetts Judge Timothy Feeley has yet to rule on the motion brought in a civil case in Middlesex Superior Court.

Kelsey, N. (2008, August 28). Author of faked Holocaust book fights to retain \$32M verdict against publisher. *StarTribune*. Retrieved on 8/30/08 from

<http://www.startribune.com/nation/27636714.html?elr=KArks:DCiUMeApc:UiacyKUU>

Eskin, B. (2008, February 29). Crying wolf: Why did it take so long for a far-fetched Holocaust memoir to be debunked? *Slate*.

Retrieved on 7/25/08 from

<http://www.slate.com/id/2185493/>



Misery Memoirs and False Memories

The literary genre referred to as “misery memories” or “mis lit” is not new, although the term seems fairly recent. Starting with David Pelzer’s 1995 book *A Child Called It* and Frank McCourt’s 1996 publication of *Angela’s Ashes*, however, the genre skyrocketed in popularity and sales, especially in Britain. Of the top 100 bestselling paperbacks in the UK in 2006, 11 were memoirs about surviving abuse, representing 8.8% of sales.

Misery memoirs are those that tell shocking stories of abuse, alcoholism, ruined childhoods and terrible traumas. Even celebrity biographies have moved in the direction of misery memoirs, with the rich and famous all too happy to “tell all.” According to some reports, however, sales of misery memoirs began to dip in 2007, possibly because the misery in many of these books has proved fraudulent. [1] Others think the market may have been sated. One published commented: “I think the trouble is a number of the big publishers are now doing a book a month. Even the most miserable person in the world is being oversupplied

by that volume.” [2]

Satirists have been having a field day. A Newsletter reader brought the topic of misery memoirs to our attention when he sent us the following from the August 15, 2008 TLS and wondered if it was true: “We are pleased to be exclusive bearers of news of a new literary prize, the James Frey Misery Memoir Award.” [3] The text goes on to list memoirs that should be considered for the prize. When we searched the web to investigate, we discovered many pieces poking fun at the genre. In March, for example, the *Guardian* published “How to write a misery memoir.” [4] The secret? Ignore uncomfortable facts; Stretch the truth; Study Dave Pelzer who has made a career out of being the “world’s most abused man by writing the same book over and over...”

A satirical interoffice memo from “Erewhon Publishing” appeared on Salon.com. [5] Corporate Counsel advised the Editorial team as follows: “Many of you have commented on the recent scandals surrounding fraudulent memoirists—particularly Misha Defonseca, the Belgian who manufactured a Holocaust past, and Margaret Jones, the white Sherman Oaks, Calif., woman masquerading as a half-Native American barrio gangsta. In response to public outcry, Erewhon Publishing has instituted a stringent new ‘cards on the table’ policy. In the future, every memoirist will be required to provide evidence of his or her dysfunction: arrest records, needle tracks, urine and stool samples...” The satire went on to list half-humorous problems with famous books of the past.

Some have wondered why misery memoirs became so popular. One person involved in publishing suggested that it is the message of “triumph over tragedy” that appeals to readers. “Misery memoirs sound so gloomy, but the overall message is ‘you can get through life. Look, I did and I’m famous.’” Another suggested that it

“puts your own life into perspective. You start to understand that your own life isn’t all that bad.” [6]

Others are not so kind and suggest that there is an unsavory side to the genre. *London Times* columnist Carol Sarler says, “they show that, as a nation, we seem utterly in thrall to pedophilia. [8] We are obsessed with it. And now, with these books, we are wallowing in the muck of it.” Another considers that the books “flatter readers’ sense of moral outrage while also secretly titillating.”

Although we had no name for them, misery memoirs have been part and parcel of the recovered memory phenomenon since its birth. Hundreds, if not thousands, of people who believed they had recovered memories or had been diagnosed with multiple personalities wrote memoirs about their horrible childhoods. A great many—to our knowledge—were self-published and the audiences negligible. Almost certainly, the majority were written for personal therapy and in an effort to help others. They have gone unchallenged. Some, such as Trudy Chase’s *When Rabbit Howls* [9] went on to be big sellers and to influence others in the belief of the reality of recovered memories.

The sheer number of misery memoir hoaxes during the past 15-20 years seems to speak of some need to say that survival alone is an achievement. The avid response of readers seems similar to the way that people respond to patients recounting stories of childhood abuse they discovered in therapy. “Surely no one would tell such a horrible story if it were not real.”

Perhaps, readers are indeed starting to tire of so much misery. Commenting about the heaviness of reading so many misery memoirs as a part of her role as a judge for a fiction prize, columnist Bel Mooney recently wrote:

“We need reassurance that people will love, marry, live in harmony, die

in peace. Too much bleakness can make us lose hope of a better world. The modern cult of misery - which has infected children's fiction, too - offers no such hope. The danger is that by dwelling too long in the gutter, we forget to look up at the stars." [8]

1. West, E. (2008, March 5). Mis lit: Is this the end for the misery memoir? *The Telegraph*. Retrieved on 9/3/08 from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/portal/main.jhtml?xml=/portal/2008/03/05/ftmag105.xml>
2. Page, B. & Neill, G. (2008, April 23). Gloom envelops the misery memoir market. Bookseller.com. retrieved on 9/3/08 from <http://www.thebookseller.com/news/59532-gloom-envelops-the-misery-memoir-market.html>
3. C., J. (2008, August 15). Paying for it. *Times Literary Supplement*. Retrieved on 9/17/08 from http://tls.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,25360-2652315_3,00.html
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9. Chase, T. (1987). *When Rabbit Howls*. E.P. Dutton: New York.



"The charm, one might say the genius, of memory is that it is choosy, chancy and temperamental."

Elizabeth Bowen

"Remembrances embellish life but forgetfulness alone makes it possible"

General Enrico Cialdini

I Waited A Long Time

For years I have been waiting for the right time to tell you about our family's progress. It has been slow, with lots of bumps and bruises along the way. Last week I helped make it possible for my oldest daughter and my husband to see each other for the first time in 16 long years. He also got to see his 13-year-old granddaughter for the first time and another granddaughter that he had known only as an infant. How bittersweet it was!

After sending us "the letter" 16 years ago, my oldest daughter and her family moved out of state. When she ended her 15-year marriage, she wanted to be part of the family again, but with conditions. She said: "from this day forward" and never once referred to the accusations, "the elephant in the living room!"

Although her two sisters knew that the accusations were false, they had very different relationships with the accuser. The youngest daughter often intercepted ugly letters from her to save us further grief. Her accusing sister sent her letters trying to lure her away from us, calling us "abusive parents." She saw her sister only once during the 16 years—at the funeral of their grandmother. She is, however, now back in loose contact with her, answering phone calls or text messages, as well as acknowledging occasional presents by mail for the children. She really doesn't want her oldest sister back in her life. This is difficult, but she is wonderfully balanced between her children, husband, job, friends and us. I believe that my youngest daughter suffered much more than I realized at the time. Although we had the support of the Foundation, she wasn't interested in reading the wonderful newsletters.

It was the middle daughter who

always kept in contact with her accusing sister, often reassuring us that she was really on our side, as were the rest of our relatives and friends. The middle daughter remembered that her older sister used to be there for her when she was in trouble. During the many years that we did not see our oldest daughter, the middle daughter helped her with home repairs, bought things for the children, and even loaned her money occasionally, if the child support payments were late.

Because of our middle daughter's encouragement I agreed to meet her in the city where the accusing daughter lived and together we would visit her. We flew in from different states, but not until after I flew first to Chicago to attend the October 2002 FMSF Conference on Reconciliation! My dear roommate in Chicago was from Alaska, a person many of you know. At the conference, several retractors convinced me that I should accept my daughter without her recanting. That was not an easy decision for me to make. I purchased a wonderful book with stories reflecting both sides of the recovered memory debate, hoping it would help my oldest daughter understand what had happened. She trashed it, but the visit went well considering the circumstances. The girls felt awkward and still do.

A few more visits and meetings followed, none with my husband. He wasn't ready...until last week. We were planning our annual drive North from Florida and I urged that we take a detour to visit our oldest daughter. My husband agreed. What had changed? During the past year he happened to answer the telephone when our oldest daughter called and the two of them talked a little. He told me that if we stopped to visit, there could be absolutely no hugs. Because were planning to meet at a public place, I encouraged him to just let it happen, without making a scene.

The meeting, fortunately, did go

well. He told me later that she said to him "I love you and I forgive you." He responded, "I love you, too." Our other daughters and our friends and relatives all applauded at a distance, as did I.

But this is not a "happily ever after" ending—at least not yet. We believe that when our once sweet daughter sought marriage counseling that her real problem was that she had a bi-polar disorder. There are many behavioral indications that this is the case and we believe that she still needs professional help. At this time, rebuilding trust between us is hampered by her seeing "visions" as well as insisting that her father "admit" his guilt.

Our lives are fragile and so is my husband's health. We have learned, however, not to be consumed by grief. We count our many other blessings and live in the present, one day at a time. We are glad that we could both meet with our daughter and our life is better for it. We hope that the relationship continues to improve.

Not just a mom



Hungry for Monsters

A limited supply of the VHS version of the remarkable documentary *Hungry for Monsters* is available through the FMSF at the reduced price of \$15.00 (includes postage). (Foreign price is \$20.00)

Hungry for Monsters is the account of one family's ordeal with memory-focused psychotherapy, the cultivation of memories, and accusations of sexual abuse. It is an excellent resource for showing others how someone can come to believe in abuse that never happened and the tragic consequences that inevitably follow.

DVD version is available at full price on Amazon. For full description of the video see: <http://www.zalafilms.com/films/hfmorder2.pdf>

To order VHS send check for \$15. to FMS Foundation.

Web Sites of Interest

- www.seweb.uci.edu/faculty/loftus/
Elizabeth Loftus
- <http://www.theisticsatanism.com/asp/>
Against Satanic Panics
- comp.uark.edu/~lampinen/read.html
The Lampinen Lab False Memory Reading Group,
University of Arkansas
- www.exploratorium.edu/memory/
The Exploratorium Memory Exhibit
- www.tmdArchives.org
The Memory Debate Archives
- <http://www.psyfmfrance.fr>
French False Memory Group
- www.psychoheresy-aware.org/ministry.html
The Bobgans question Christian counseling
- www.IllinoisFMS.org
Illinois-Wisconsin FMS Society
- www.ltech.net/OHIOarmhp
Ohio Group
- www.afma.asn.au
Australian False Memory Association
- www.bfms.org.uk
British False Memory Society
- www.religioustolerance.org/sra.htm
Information about Satanic Ritual Abuse
- www.angryparents.net
Parents Against Cruel Therapy
- www.geocities.com/newcosanz
New Zealand FMS Group
- www.peterellis.org.nz
Site run by Brian Robinson contains information about Christchurch Creche and other cases.
- www.werkgroepwfh.nl
Netherlands FMS Group
- www.falseallegation.org
National Child Abuse
Defense & Resource Center
- www.nasw.org/users/markp
Excerpts from *Victims of Memory*
- www.rickross.com/groups/fsm.html
Ross Institute
- www.enigma.se/info/FFI.htm
FMS in Scandanavia - Janet Hagbom
- www.nctj.org/
National Center for Reason & Justice
www.traumaversterking.nl
English language web site of Dutch retractor.
- www.quackwatch.org
This site is run by Stephen Barrett, M.D.
- www.stopbadtherapy.com
Contains information about filing complaints.
- www.FMSFonline.org
Web site of FMS Foundation.

Legal Web Sites of Interest

- www.caseassist.com
- www.findlaw.com
- www.legalengine.com
- www.accused.com
- www.abuse-excuse.com

The Rutherford Family Speaks to FMS Families

The DVD made by the Rutherford family is *the* most popular DVD of FMSF families. It covers the complete story from accusation, to retraction and reconciliation. Family members describe the things they did to cope and to help reunite. Of particular interest are Beth Rutherford's comments about what her family did that helped her to retract and return.

Available in DVD format only:

To order send request to
FMSF -DVD, 1955 Locust St.
Philadelphia, PA 19103
\$10.00 per DVD; Canada add \$4.00;
other countries add \$10.00
Make checks payable to FMS
Foundation

Don't Miss It! Coming in November 2008

***Try to Remember:
Psychiatry's Clash
Over Meaning, Memory,
and Mind***

Paul McHugh, M.D., Washington,
DC: Dana Press

Recommended Books Remembering Trauma

Richard McNally

Science and Pseudoscience in Clinical Psychology

S. O. Lilienfeld, S.J. Lynn, J.M. Lohr (eds.)

Psychology Astray: Fallacies in Studies of "Repressed Memory" and Childhood Trauma

by Harrison G. Pope, Jr., M.D.

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See Georgia

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Phoenix

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Al & Lela 870-363-4368

CALIFORNIA

Sacramento

Jocelyn 530-570-1862

San Francisco & North Bay

Charles 415-435-9618

San Francisco & South Bay

Eric 408-738-0469

East Bay Area

Judy 925-952-4853

Central Coast

Carole 805-967-8058

Palm Desert

Eileen and Jerry 909-659-9636

Central Orange County

Chris & Alan 949-733-2925

Covina Area

Floyd & Libby 626-357-2750

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Colorado Springs

Doris 719-488-9738

CONNECTICUT

S. New England

Paul 203-458-9173

FLORIDA

Dade/Broward

Madeline 954-966-4FMS

Central Florida - Please call for mtg. time

John & Nancy 352-750-5446

Sarasota

Francis & Sally 941-342-8310

Tampa Bay Area

Bob & Janet 727-856-7091

GEORGIA

Atlanta

Wallie & Jill 770-971-8917

ILLINOIS

Chicago & Suburbs - 1st Sun. (MO)

Eileen 847-985-7693 or

Liz & Roger 847-827-1056

Peoria

Bryant & Lynn 309-674-2767

INDIANA

Indiana Assn. for Responsible Mental

Health Practices

Pat 317-865-8913

Helen 574-753-2779

KANSAS

Wichita - Meeting as called

Pat 785-762-2825

KENTUCKY

Louisville- Last Sun. (MO) @ 2pm

Bob 502-367-1838

LOUISIANA

Sarah 337-235-7656

MAINE

Rumford

Carolyn 207-364-8891

Portland - 4th Sun. (MO)

Bobby 207-878-9812

MARYLAND

Carol 410-465-6555

MASSACHUSETTS/NEW ENGLAND

Andover - 2nd Sun. (MO) @ 1pm

Frank 978-263-9795

MICHIGAN

Greater Detroit Area

Nancy 248-642-8077

Ann Arbor

Martha 734-439-4055

MINNESOTA

Terry & Collette 507-642-3630

Dan & Joan 651-631-2247

MISSOURI

Kansas City - Meeting as called

Pat 785-738-4840

Springfield - Quarterly (4th Sat. of Apr.,

Jul., Oct., Jan.) @12:30pm

Tom 417-753-4878

Roxie 417-781-2058

MONTANA

Lee & Avone 406-443-3189

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Jean 603-772-2269

Mark 802-872-0847

NEW JERSEY

Sally 609-927-4147 (Southern)

Nancy 973-729-1433 (Northern)

NEW MEXICO

Albuquerque - 2nd Sat. (BI-MO) @1 pm

Southwest Room -Presbyterian Hospital

Maggie 505-662-7521(after 6:30pm) or

Sy 505-758-0726

NEW YORK

Westchester, Rockland, etc.

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Susan 704-538-7202

OHIO

Cleveland

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OREGON

Portland area

Kathy 503-655-1587

PENNSYLVANIA

Harrisburg

Paul & Betty 717-691-7660

Pittsburgh

Rick & Renee 412-563-5509

Montrose

John 570-278-2040

Wayne (includes S. NJ)

Jim & Jo 610-783-0396

TENNESSEE

Nashville

Kate 615-665-1160

TEXAS

Houston

Jo or Beverly 713-464-8970

El Paso

Mary Lou 915-595-2966

UTAH

Keith 801-467-0669

VERMONT

Mark 802-872-0847

WASHINGTON

See Oregon

WISCONSIN

Katie & Leo 414-476-0285 or

Susanne & John 608-427-3686

WYOMING

Alan & Lorinda 307-322-4170

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UNITED KINGDOM

The British False Memory Society

Madeline 44-1225 868-682

Deadline for the WINTER 2009 issue is December 10. Meeting notices **MUST** be in writing and should be sent no later than **two months before meeting**.

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pjf@cis.upenn.edu

if you wish to receive electronic versions of this newsletter and notices of radio and television broadcasts about FMS. All the message need say is "add to the FMS-News". It would be useful, but not necessary, if you add your full name (all addresses and names will remain strictly confidential).

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