

BRIEF SUMMARY

Schacter, D. L., Norman, K. A., & Koutstaal, W. (1997). The recovered memory debate: A cognitive neuroscience perspective. In M. A. Conway (Ed.), *Recovered Memories and False Memories: Debates in Psychology* (pp. 63–99). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(from the chapter) From the perspective of memory researchers, there are three broad areas in which questions need to be posed about the state of evidence relevant to the recovered memories debate. The first set of questions concerns the issue of 'forgetting.' [...] The second set of questions concerns the issue of 'distortion.' [...] The third [...] concerns the relation between recovered memories of actual abuse and illusory memories of abuse. [...] In this chapter, we examine evidence that pertains to each set of questions. For each set, we summarize briefly the state of knowledge regarding memories of childhood sexual abuse. We also broaden the frame of analysis to consider relevant evidence from other areas of research, including clinical observations of traumatic memory as well as current cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience. Our goals are twofold. The first is to provide our own assessment of the state of the evidence in the recovered memories debate. Here, we emphasize that answers to the various questions we have posed need not all point toward the same side of the debate. For instance, it is perfectly possible to conclude, as we do, that illusory memories of abuse exist yet at the same time concede that some traumatic experiences can be forgotten and later recovered. The second goal is to seek guidance and direction for future research from current work on remembering and forgetting.
