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Psychology False memory is understood as the recollection of an event, or specific details of this event, that in reality did not actually occur. False memory is differed from true memory based on the underlining understanding that the events in true memory are at least a partial reflection of actual events, while false memory is understood to be entirely fictitious. False memory has taken on a number of important implications within the medical field, but is of particular relevance within court proceedings and witness testimony. This essay examines the nature of false memory within the context of false memory syndrome, and then the research of Elizabeth Loftus and the accuracy of eyewitness testimony.

Within this context of investigation, one of the important considerations is what has come to be referred to as ' false memory syndrome'. False memory syndrome is a recognized medical condition where individuals develop memories or recollections that are entirely made-up, but in reality they are fictitious; still, the individual strongly believes these memories are reality and is not able to determine their fictional nature. The syndrome aspect of this order is distinguishable from simply having false memories based on the level of psychic involvement the individual places on the specific memories. In these regards, individuals with false memory syndrome have greatly structured their identity and real-world paradigm around this falsely constructed memory. This syndrome was first articulated by Peter J. Freyd and has come to receive a considerable amount of scientific and psychological investigation (" Eyewitness Testimony" 1984). There are a variety of conflicting explanations for the emergence of false memory syndrome in individuals. One of the primary explanations is that false memories emerge from recovered memory therapy. These are psychological

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therapies that seek to aid the individual in recollecting long dormant memories. Still, the nature of false memory syndrome remains controversial among researchers and still is not an officially recognized disorder.

One of the most notable realms where false memory syndrome is considered is within the context of court proceeding eyewitness testimony. In these regards, one of the primary researchers in the field is Elizabeth Loftus. A great amount of Loftus' research points to the complications of eyewitness testimony. One of the prevalent research elements was the demonstration in clinical trials that individuals consistently demonstrated false memory after researchers imbued specific cues into questions about an event the test participants had witnessed ("Eyewitness Testimony" 1984). In addition to such false memory elements, Loftus has identified a number of practical errors that regularly occur within eyewitness testimony. In these regards, Loftus argues that individual fallibility, such as poor eye site, stress, and difficult viewing conditions greatly clouds individual perception. In addition to these elements, Loftus argues that individuals are subject to a variety of biases, including personal expectations and stereotypes that further cloud individual perception of events. The collection of this points to a serious fallibility with eyewitness testimony.

In conclusion, this essay has examined the nature of false memories and the fallibility of eyewitness testimony. False memory is understood as recollections of events that did not actually occur. Eyewitness testimony is also considered and revealed to be highly problematic for a variety of reasons.

References

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Eyewitness Testimony—Psychological perspectives. Wells, G. & Loftus, E. F. (Eds.) (1984). NY: Cambridge University Press.