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Reflections on a Memory Discovery

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If a picture is worth a thousand words, then what is a video worth? Particularly when it captures in action one of the most controversial psychological phenomena of our time: the discovery of a seemingly forgotten incident of sexual abuse.¹ Over the past several years I have combed the literature, attended numerous conferences on the topic, and interviewed more than half a dozen individuals who claim to have discovered forgotten memories of abuse. Collectively, these various sources have persuaded me that it is possible for individuals to discover seemingly forgotten memories of sexual abuse. However, no other single source of evidence has had quite the impact as that of watching a 6-year-old girl articulately describe being victimized by her mother, and subsequently seeing the same person 11 years later initially fail to remember, and then suddenly recall, the abuse that she described years before.

Although the emotional intensity of this video makes it tremendously compelling, it also raises the concern that the drama of the moment could overshadow potential disparities or alternative accounts. Thus it is important that the immediate overwhelming impression made by viewing this videotape be tempered by a careful and systematic analysis of its constituent elements. In this regard, it may be helpful to apply the case-based analysis that we (Schooler & Ambadar, 1997; Schooler, Ambadar, & Bendiksen, in press; Schooler, Bendiksen, & Ambadar, in press) have recently developed for investigating allegedly discovered memories of sexual abuse. This approach is based on the premise that discovered memories of abuse actually entail three distinct claims: (a) that abuse occurred, (b) that the abuse was forgotten, and (c) that the individual had a *discovery experience* in which a seemingly forgotten traumatic event was recalled. Using this approach on a number of cases² we have found that, rather than simply being true or false, discovered memories may vary in the degree to which we can have confidence in these three distinct claims. Careful analysis of the present case similarly

suggests that although Jane appears to have had an authentic memory discovery experience corresponding to actual abuse, the nature of her intermediate forgetting and the accuracy of some components of her discovered memory remain in question. I now turn to a brief consideration of these three aspects of Jane's case.

EVIDENCE FOR THE REALITY OF THE ABUSE

Establishing the authenticity of alleged sexual abuse is inherently difficult because such abuse typically occurs under clandestine conditions, providing little direct physical evidence. In this case there is also no incontrovertible evidence indicating that sexual abuse occurred. In addition, several mitigating factors could be used to argue against Jane's claims that her mother abused her. Nevertheless, when all evidence as presented by Corwin and Olafson is considered, it seems (at least to this author) most likely to support Corwin's original conclusion that Jane's mother did in fact engage in inappropriate sexual behavior that was both invasive and painful.

Before reviewing the evidence in support of Jane's allegations, we must carefully consider the factors that could potentially argue against the veracity of her claims. One important issue is the fact that Jane's testimony was elicited in the context of a custody battle. Thus Jane's father could have contributed to her allegations either by direct coercion or repeated suggestion. A second potential source of concern is the fact that Jane made and then subsequently (the next day) retracted allegations that her father engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior. This inconsistency in her testimony demonstrates that Jane was capable of making false claims. Finally, it should be noted that before her interviews with Corwin, Jane discussed her mother's alleged sexual misconduct

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with a variety of individuals, including two psychological evaluators, one police investigator, and her therapist. Thus one or more of these individuals could have introduced suggestions that might have contributed to Jane's memory of the alleged events.

In light of these potentially serious concerns, how confident can we really be in Jane's videotaped claim that her mother routinely engaged in a bathing practice that included "rubbing her finger up my vagina and pulling my hair" (p. 100)?

Although it is impossible to fully resolve this issue, a careful review of the evidence provided by Corwin and Olafson provides what I personally find to be compelling reasons to believe that Jane was the victim of sexual abuse. As with virtually all conclusions made in legal settings (hence juries) and arguably many of those made in science (hence peer review), assessment of the evidence in this case involves a subjective element. Therefore, readers may disagree on exactly how likely it is that Jane was actually abused in the manner that she reports. We can only hope that in formulating opinions on this issue, readers will carefully consider all of the evidence and try to avoid letting their preconcep-

tions regarding the likelihood of memory discoveries color their assessment of the allegations of this clearly intelligent and articulate 6-year-old.

Perhaps the most potentially discrediting source of evidence in this case is the fact that Jane also accused her father of abuse. However, there are a number of reasons to discount both this allegation and its mitigating implications. First, unlike the repeated and consistent allegations made against her mother, Jane's allegations against her father were made only once and were immediately retracted the following day. Second, Jane indicated both to a social services investigator and to Corwin (giving her Brownie Oath) that she had been coerced by her mother to make the allegations under the threat that "if I didn't lie to the CPS that she would do something bad to me" (p. 99).

Jane's claim that she was coerced into making false allegations is further supported by the fact that she reported her mother's use of coercion prior to her accusations against her father. For example, in the

first interview with Corwin, Jane says that her mother threatened, "If you tell your dad about this I'm going to do something to you" (p. 94). Jane expressed similar concerns about her mother's threats and coercion in her second interview with Dr. Corwin, which also occurred before her allegations against her father.

In striking contrast to her immediate retraction of her allegations against her father, Jane repeatedly and consistently maintained that her mother engaged in

In striking contrast to her immediate retraction of her allegations against her father, Jane repeatedly and consistently maintained that her mother engaged in sexually abusive behaviors. Indeed, one of the most compelling aspects of Jane's allegations is the consistency of her story across interviews.

sexually abusive behaviors. Indeed, one of the most compelling aspects of Jane's allegations is the consistency of her story across interviews. Although every detail is not mentioned in every report, Corwin and Olafson's review of the case reveals a strikingly consistent characterization of Jane's allegations across interviews with two psychological evaluators, one police investigator, her therapist, and in the three interviews with Corwin. These include repeated allegations that her mother engaged in digital penetration, inserting her finger up Jane's vagina, causing physical discomfort and pain. This activity is also repeatedly reported to be accompanied by the inappropriate query of whether that feels good, the admonition that she

can do anything she wants with Jane's body, and the subsequent application of powder to the vagina, causing further pain to the (presumably) injured area.

In addition to the compelling consistency of Jane's allegations to multiple individuals in numerous interviews, one must also consider the persuasive manner in which she describes the abusive events in the video. As I watched the video, I found it very difficult to dismiss the earnestness with which she describes her mother's threats and abusive behavior, the sincerity with which she gave the Brownie Oath that she was telling the truth, and the indignation with which she denied that her father had encouraged her to make these allegations. Of course, it is possible that I was duped by a remarkably guileful 6-year-old. Although I am familiar with the literature on credibility assessment and indeed have published work related to this issue (cf. Loftus, Korf, & Schooler, 1989; Schooler, Clark, & Loftus, 1988; Schooler, Gerhard, & Loftus, 1986), I am not an expert in detecting deception.

However, in this regard it is worth noting that Paul Ekman, one of the foremost experts in the use of nonverbal cues for assessing deception, similarly concludes that we can "have confidence in the truthfulness of Jane's statements in the first interview" (p. 113). In a conversation taped with his consent, Ekman (personal communication, January 21, 1997) provided the following reasons for why he found Jane's testimony to be credible:

Her replies had such brief reaction times and her emotions were so on the surface that I thought it extremely likely that she is telling the truth. I was also impressed that she did show shame when she talked about her mom putting her fingers in her vagina and asking "whether she liked it," and that she did show some anger when asked, "Did your father tell you to say these things?"

Thus, although we cannot be certain that she is being truthful, it seems most likely that Jane was describing the events as she remembered them.

Even if we accept that Jane was not being deceitful, it is still possible that her original recollection is in error. For example, her mother might have simply been bathing her vaginal area, but perhaps as a consequence of postevent suggestion by her father or the earlier interviewers, Jane came to misremember the event as being more abusive than it really was. Indeed, when Jane later recalls the incidents, she questions whether the vaginal penetration was deliberate: "But I don't know if it was intentional, or if it was just accidental" (p. 106).

Although it is possible that Jane's mother was just trying to be hygienic, there are several reasons to suspect that her alleged actions were in fact abusive. First, in her various interviews Jane provided a number of additional details consistent with abuse, including claims that her mother pulled her hair, gave her black eyes, burned her feet, and threatened her if she disclosed these activities. In addition, Jane reported that her mother said a variety of things that seem inconsistent with a simple bathing scenario, including asking her whether that feels good and telling her that "I can do whatever I want to your body" (p. 95). Finally, Jane's reports included a number of factors suggesting that her mother engaged in deep and painful penetration. Jane repeatedly refers to her mother as putting her finger "up my vagina." In her second videotaped interview, Jane used her fist and finger to demonstrate how deeply her mother penetrated her vagina. Finally, in both her original psychological interview as well as in her first interview with Corwin, Jane specifically referred to the physical pain that the genital penetration produced. Together, these considerations suggest that Jane was quite likely the victim

of some abuse (or at the very least grossly inappropriate bathing practices), and, indeed, that was the determination of the juvenile court when it reviewed this evidence at the time (Corwin, personal communication, January 18, 1997).

Another important component of Jane's original characterization of her victimization is her assertion that the abusive event occurred on multiple occasions. This issue is of particular note because many have argued that recovered memories are particularly doubtful when they involve allegations of repeated incidents of abuse (Ofshe & Waters, 1994; Schacter, 1995). If we accept Jane's assertion that her mother engaged in this abuse "much more than once," then this case would suggest that even repeated incidents of abuse can lead to subsequent discovered memories. Clearly, we should be suspicious about the precise number of times that Jane concludes the abusive event occurred. After substantial discussion about how much more 10 is than 20, Jane finally volunteers that this event occurred "probably 99 times." Although her precise estimation of the frequency of the abuse may be suspect, if we are prepared to accept Jane's contention that this event occurred once, then it is difficult to dismiss her equally vehement claim that it occurred repeatedly.

THE NATURE OF THE FORGETTING

Establishing the precise extent of forgetting prior to a memory discovery experience is perhaps even more difficult than corroborating the original event. One problem with determining the actual degree of forgetting is that it requires the assessment of a prior knowledge state from the vantage of a new knowledge state (Schooler, 1994; Schooler, Bendiksen, & Ambadar, in press; Schooler, Ambadar, & Bendiksen, in press). After her memory discovery experience, Jane concludes, "that's the first time I've remembered that since saying that when I was 6 years old" (p. 106). However, how confident can we be that she really had not thought about the incident since her last interview? In our previous analyses of discovered memory claims, we have found that individuals can misconstrue their prior memory states, in effect forgetting about a period in which a memory had in fact been recalled. Several individuals that we interviewed were astounded to discover that they had told their husbands about the incidents at a time in which they thought the memory had been forgotten. We have termed this underestimation of prior remembering, the *forgot-it-all-along-effect* (Schooler, Bendiksen, & Ambadar, in press) and suggest that it may involve mechanisms comparable to those entailed in other hindsight biases in which individuals misconstrue their prior

knowledge state from the vantage of a new knowledge state (e.g., Fischhoff, 1982). Accordingly, they may reason, "If I am this shocked and surprised now, then I must have previously completely forgotten about the experience."

Although we cannot be certain about whether such exaggeration of forgetting applies to Jane, it seems quite plausible that it may. Jane does not appear, as she finishes her interview, that she is about to completely and entirely forget the incident that she just so articulately described. Perhaps I am showing my clinical naïveté, but her demeanor during the interview simply seems too "normal" to suggest that she is about to engage in what would, by all accounts, be an abnormal feat of forgetting. Thus, contrary to Jane's assertion, it seems quite possible that she continued to remember the abusive incidents for some time after her interview. She may have just forgotten about what it was she once remembered.

Although it seems unlikely that Jane forgot about the abuse as soon as she finished talking about it, it does appear that she had not thought about the sexual abuse for some time before her second interview. However, does this prove that her memory for the abuse was truly unavailable (Tulving & Pearlstone, 1966)? The problem here is that the concept of forgetting is itself rather complex. This point is clearly illustrated any time one reminisces about the past. Invariably, memories will come to mind that have not been thought about for some time, but were they truly forgotten or had they simply not been searched for? On the surface, the issue of whether Jane had ever previously tried to search her memory for the critical details discovered in her second interview might not seem applicable. The entire reason that Jane asked to view the tapes was to help her remember what actually happened years before. Moreover, she indicated considerable consternation at her inability to resolve exactly what happened to her as a child. Presumably, if Jane was grappling with whether she was really abused, she would have made a concerted effort to search her memory, or would she? In his analysis of Jane's various facial expressions, Ekman concludes that "she is extremely ambivalent about remembering this stuff" (personal communication, January 21, 1997). As well

she might be, given the potential impact that fully remembering her past could have on her newfound relationship with her mother. Thus it seems quite plausible that despite her obvious interest in the issue, Jane may not have made a concerted effort to search her memory for all incidents of abuse. It therefore seems quite plausible that Jane's memory for the sexual abuse might well have been available all along had she only looked for it.

Additional evidence for the possibility that Jane's memory may not have been as previously "unavail-

able" as it seems comes from a consideration of the question with which she arrived. Jane arrives claiming that "I remember what I said. . . . It's the memory of if what I said was true that I am having a problem with." In recounting what she currently remembers, Jane recalls,

I told you, I guess, I told the court that my mom abused me, that she burned my feet on the stove . . . that's really the most serious accusation against her that I remember . . . [but] I still don't remember if that's in fact how I was burnt. That's what I am having a problem remembering. (p. 105)

It appears that the question with which Jane arrived, and therefore presumably the question with which she had been probing her memory, was whether she had been subjected to *physical* abuse. In contrast, there is no evidence that she had been trying to recall whether she had been subjected to *sexual* abuse. Jane's failure to indicate any concern about her prior sexual allegations is particularly striking when considered in light of how quickly she acknowledges that such allegations were made. In response to Corwin's question regarding her recollections of sexual abuse, she quickly responds, "No. I mean, I remember that was part of the accusation" (p. 105). Remarkably, Jane exhibits no sense of discovering anything new when she first acknowledges that sexual abuse had been part of the original accusation. She says it quickly and matter-of-factly. Why, one wonders, if she knew that sexual abuse was part of the original accusation, did she not previously mention this as one of the issues that she wanted to resolve? The only reasonable conclusion, it seems, is that if Jane did not forget the issue of sexual abuse (as

If such memories are sought, the critical challenge is to find ways of cautiously encouraging individuals to search their memory for possible incidents of sexual abuse, without introducing the very dangerous presupposition that such events are likely to have occurred.

revealed by the rapidity and matter-of-fact quality with which she acknowledged the accusation), she must have ignored it.

We can bicker over what mental processes enabled Jane to avoid considering the issue of whether she had been sexually abused, but it seems likely that somehow she simply did not query her memory for incidents of sexual abuse. If she neglected to search her memory for experiences of sexual abuse, then the memory may well have been available (in principle) all along. Indeed, in support of this view, as soon as she does explicitly try to remember whether she had been sexually abused, the memory comes flooding back.

THE MEMORY DISCOVERY EXPERIENCE

Although there is some uncertainty about the original abuse experience and considerable uncertainty about the nature and extent of her prior forgetting, there is little question that Jane had an authentic memory discovery experience; that is, she sincerely believes that she discovered a traumatic memory of which she perceives herself to have been previously unaware. In our prior examinations of discovered memory cases, we have encountered several reported characteristics of the discovery experience that are clearly illustrated in the present case. First, the memory discoveries that we have examined are generally reported to have been associated with marked surprise, as the individuals reel from the perception that they have discovered a painful memory of which they had no prior knowledge. Such surprise is reflected in Jane's facial expressions, which very clearly indicate that "she is astounded, she is amazed" (Ekman, personal communication, January 21, 1997). Jane's surprise is also indicated by her initial characterization of the memory discovery: "Oh my gosh, that's really, really, weird" (p. 105). In addition to the surprise, our discovered memories are also typically reported to have involved a powerful onrush of emotions. This is also clearly evident in Jane's case, with tears welling up as she begins to recount her seemingly new memory.

The powerful and sincere emotions expressed by Jane make it very difficult to imagine that she is feigning a memory discovery, a possibility that once again our expert on detecting deception (Paul Ekman) considers extremely remote. Nevertheless, because of the powerful controversy surrounding claims of discovered memories, skeptics might suggest that this memory discovery was a ruse of some sort. In this regard, it is important to emphasize that Corwin is a practitioner and researcher with a national reputation for maintaining the highest of ethical standards (of which his handling of this case is indeed a model). Thus we can have complete confidence that Jane was

not deliberately "put up to this." There is also no reason to believe that Jane spontaneously decided to feign a memory discovery. It was, after all, Corwin's suggestion that they view the tape together and video her.

Although clearly no intentional effort was made to encourage Jane to have a memory discovery, it is still possible that the conditions of the interview somehow produced an expectation that Jane would have a memory discovery. Such expectations could produce a pressure, or what is sometimes referred to as a "demand characteristic," for Jane to discover something important. Indeed, this situation contained some inherent demands for Jane to discover something important in her memory because her self-professed goal in viewing the videotape was to help her remember what had happened. However, if there was some implicit expectation that Jane would discover a new memory, presumably such discoveries would be expected to occur after rather than, as it happened, before viewing the video. Thus there seems little reason to believe that much demand existed for Jane to have a memory discovery at the time that she did.

Although we can have confidence in the sincerity of Jane's memory discovery, the assessment of the contents of her discovery is somewhat more complex. In the past we (Schooler, Bendiksen, & Ambadar, in press) have argued that reinterpretations of potentially ambiguous situations may exaggerate memory discovery experiences. There are several ways in which a reinterpretation mechanism could potentially have been involved in the present case. For example, Jane could have recalled what was in actuality a benign bathing experience but, in the context of thinking about potential sexual abuse, reinterpreted it as sexual abuse. This alternative seems unlikely, however, because following her memory discovery Jane does not classify her memory of her mother's actions as necessarily abusive, emphasizing twice that she does not recall "if it was intentional, or if it was just accidental" (p. 106). If anything, Jane's change in her interpretation of the event was from originally categorizing the event as abusive to later being more ambivalent about its abusive qualities.

Another possible way in which reinterpretation could have contributed to Jane's experience of having a memory discovery is by exaggerating her recollection of the physical discomfort that her mother actually caused. Following her memory discovery, Jane goes into considerable detail regarding her memory of the physical pain, saying, "I don't remember anything specific until I felt that pain. . . . And then it's like I took a picture . . . of the pain, and what was inflicting the pain . . . that's all the memory consists

of" (p. 106). In contrast, in her original videotaped interview, although Jane appears somber when she describes her mother's actions, she does not explicitly mention the experience of pain. It is thus possible that in the context of the inherent emotion and expectations associated with revisiting the potential abuse from her past, Jane may have imbued what was only a modestly uncomfortable bathing practice with exaggerated pain that never actually occurred. Although we cannot entirely rule out this possibility, there are a number of arguments against it. First, although Jane did not explicitly mention that her mother caused pain in the interview that we (the commentators) were shown, she did, as noted, explicitly mention the pain of the experience in several other interviews. Second, Jane's characterization of the penetration itself suggests that it should have been painful (e.g., in Interview 2 Jane inserts her finger deeply into her fist to illustrate the depth of penetration, and in several interviews Jane refers to her mother's finger being rubbed "*up my vagina*."). Finally, as noted, Jane's repeated and consistent accounts of her mother's tendency to inflict pain support the likelihood that the bathing activity was painful as well. Thus, although it is still possible that Jane's discovered recollection of pain is distorted, when all of the evidence is considered, it seems more likely that her recollection corresponds to real pain that Jane's mother inflicted on her during bathing.

Although it seems reasonable (at least to this author) to conclude that Jane's discovered memory of being painfully penetrated in the bathtub corresponds to a real event, other aspects of Jane's memory discovery are more questionable. Indeed, there are a number of serious inconsistencies between her accounts on the two occasions. For example, during her interview at age 6 Jane recalls multiple incidents of abuse; during the second interview she only recalls a single incident. In her original account, Jane describes her mother as intentionally penetrating her and asking her whether "that feels good." However, her latter recollection is ambiguous regarding her mother's intent. Most striking of all, Jane's discovered memory includes a claim that does not correspond to her prior testimony—that is, that she previously accused her mother of "taking pictures of me and my brother and selling them" (p. 106). Although we cannot know whether such events actually took place, there is no record of her ever accusing her mother of taking such pictures (Corwin, personal communication, January 18, 1996), and there is certainly no mention of it in the prior interview. In this regard, it is notable that Jane does not remember the alleged photo taking itself. Rather, what Jane remembers is

making accusations about such photo taking, accusations that appear never to have been made.

What are we to make of the consistencies and inconsistencies between Jane's two recollections? One important implication is that discovered memories do not need to be classified as either entirely veridical or as pure fabrications. Rather, memory discoveries may involve a complex combination of factual, confused, and nonfactual elements. In this respect, discovered memories corresponding to real abuse may resemble other autobiographical memories that can capture the gist of events while being wholly inaccurate in many important respects (cf. Neisser, 1981).

Possible Mechanisms

In closing it may be helpful to speculate about some of the mechanisms that might have contributed to Jane's discovered memory experience. In the past, we (Schooler, Bendiksen, & Ambadar, in press; Schooler & Hyman, in press) have identified a number of basic memory mechanisms that may contribute to discovered memories, including lack of verbal rehearsal (e.g., Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1969), delay (e.g., Ebbinghaus, 1885/1913), directed forgetting (e.g., Bjork, 1989), reinterpretation (e.g., Anderson & Pitchert, 1978), encoding specificity (e.g., Tulving & Thompson, 1973), state-dependent memory (e.g., Eich, 1980), thought suppression (Wegner, 1994), and hypermnnesia (e.g., Erdelyi & Kleinbard, 1978). In the current case, the construct of encoding specificity seems especially likely to have played a role.

One consistent characteristic of the cases that I have reviewed is that memory discovery experiences were reportedly prompted by conditions that corresponded in some significant manner to the original memory (e.g., seeing a movie about an individual grappling with sexual abuse). The correspondence between encoding and retrieval conditions, termed *encoding specificity*, is a well-known factor in facilitating memory retrieval (Tulving & Thompson, 1973). Thus it seems quite plausible that encoding specificity was operative in this case as well. Clearly, interacting with someone whom Jane had not seen since her original testimony would, according to the principles of encoding specificity, provide a powerful retrieval cue.

Retrieval inhibition (e.g., Anderson & Spellman, 1995; Bjork, 1989; Roediger, 1974) may also have contributed to Jane's sudden recollection experience by minimizing her prior recollections of sexual abuse. Basic memory research suggests that the act of retrieving some elements of a memory can actually impair the subsequent recollection of the previously nonretrieved elements (Anderson & Spellman, 1995; Schooler, Foster, & Loftus, 1988). As I mentioned

earlier, Jane appears to have repeatedly attempted to retrieve memories of physical abuse, without trying to retrieve memories of sexual abuse. It is thus plausible that Jane's exclusive searches for memories of physical abuse may have reduced the accessibility of her memory for the sexual abuse, thereby producing the conditions in which a sudden memory discovery experience was possible.

Although encoding specificity and retrieval-induced inhibition may well have played a useful role, we should not ignore the potentially critical role of Corwin's direct request for Jane to search her memory for incidents of sexual abuse. It seems likely that the initiation of directed retrieval (cf. Bekerian & Dritchel, 1992; Jacoby, 1984) specifically aimed at the issue of sexual abuse was the proximate cause of this memory discovery. The corollary of this premise, of course, is that the prior absence of such directed retrieval may have helped to provide the conditions that allowed a discovery of this sort to be possible.

I mention the possible role of directed retrieval in eliciting Jane's memory discovery with some trepidation. Although I differ from some of my cognitive colleagues in my assessment of the likelihood that discovered memories can be authentic, I share their concern that aggressively searching for memories of sexual abuse may result in the generation of false memories (e.g., Hyman, Husband, & Billings, 1995; Loftus, 1993; Lindsay & Read, 1994; Schooler, 1994; Schooler, Bendiksen, & Ambadar, in press). I therefore am wary of encouraging the use of memory retrieval techniques that could in principle lead to dangerous false memories. Nevertheless, as the present case illustrates, directly searching memory for incidents of sexual abuse can lead to authentic (as well as inauthentic) recollections. Of course, whether it is necessarily in an individual's best interest to access potentially available memories of abuse is a completely separate issue. However, if such memories are sought, the critical challenge is to find ways of cautiously encouraging individuals to search their memory for possible incidents of sexual abuse, without introducing the very dangerous presupposition that such events are likely to have occurred.

CONCLUSION

I am very grateful to Dr. Corwin for giving me the opportunity to comment on this remarkable case. It is a testament to the progress that we have been making in the field that it is now possible for cognitive and clinical psychologists to discuss the various aspects of a discovered memory case in a civil and noncombative manner. It is my hope that this case may help to further deflate the tensions that have

surrounded this controversial issue. Perhaps its compelling aspects will help to persuade some skeptics that individuals really can have discovered memories corresponding to authentic incidents of abuse. Perhaps its many complexities will help to persuade advocates of discovered memories that such discoveries may distort assessments of prior forgetting and introduce memories of entire events (e.g., Jane's recollection of alleging that her mother took and sold presumably pornographic pictures) that are unlikely to have occurred.

I hope that Corwin and Olafson's general approach to this case, with its ethical sensitivity, its use of longitudinal evidence, and its willingness to invite alternative perspectives, can serve as a model for the future. At the same time, however, I hope that before research studies are developed on the basis of this serendipitously discovered procedure, great care and consideration are given to the potential consequences of introducing situations that we now know may produce painful memory discoveries.

NOTES

1. The name of this alleged phenomenon has been a source of much confusion and contention. Such recollections have been referred to as recovered, repressed, delayed, exhumed, and a variety of even less flattering terms. However, all of these terms carry excessive and unwanted assumptions (Schooler, Ambadar, et al., in press). I therefore prefer the term *discovered memories* (and variants such as *memory discoveries* and *discovered memory experiences*). In addition to jettisoning the excess baggage associated with prior terms, the term *discovered memories* has several advantages. First and foremost, it focuses on the defining characteristic of these experiences, namely that the individual has the strong sense of discovering something important in his or her memory that was not appreciated before. Second, it does not imply any specific mechanism of forgetting or conditions of recollection. Finally, it encourages patients, clinicians, and indeed the field as a whole to treat such recollections with both the gravity and caution appropriate to all major discovery claims. A memory discovery may be as accurate as that of the double helix or as groundless as the discovery of cold fusion. It may also be, like Columbus's discovery of America, very significant but not at all what it first appears to be—Columbus, after all, thought he had found India!

2. Our cases have been identified through informal networking. We would be most grateful to readers who are able to introduce us to other potentially corroboratable discovered memory cases. Complete anonymity of all relevant parties is of course assured.

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