

VISUAL MEMORY DISTORTION AND FANTASY PRONENESS

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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

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ABSTRACT

It has been suggested that there is a relationship between visual memory distortion and fantasy proneness (Merckelbach, Muris, Horselenberg & Stougie, 1999; Merckelbach, Horselenberg & Muris, 2001; Aleman & Haan, 2003). This relationship appears to be primarily in the cognitive processing of imagery and the executive processes of frontal lobe functioning (Aleman & Haan, 2003). The current research investigated the relationship between visual memory distortion and fantasy proneness using a non-experimental within subjects design. A total of 49 university students from both the sciences and humanities faculties, between the ages of 20 and 35 years, chose to participate. The students completed a measure of fantasy proneness, the Creative Experiences Questionnaire (CEQ), and were individually assessed by the researcher, on visual memory distortion, using the Rey-Osterrieth Complex Figure Test (ROCFT). Qualitative observations of strategy were recorded by the researcher in the ROCFT and used in the statistical analysis, as a means of examining strategy as an executive process (Lezak, 1995). Low scores in the qualitative strategy score indicated more use of strategy, whilst high scores indicated little to no use of strategy. No significant relationship was found in the sample ($n = 49$) between visual memory distortion and fantasy proneness, measured by the ROCFT and the CEQ respectively. The sample was then split into two groups, sciences ($n = 31$) and humanities ($n = 18$) students, in order to investigate the relationship within separate faculties. A significant correlation was observed in the humanities students between the CEQ and the copy trial of the ROCFT, where there was a moderate negative relationship ($r = -0.59$, $p = 0.009$). The significant correlation observed in the sciences students was between the CEQ and the qualitative strategy component of the ROCFT, where there was a weak positive relationship ($r = 0.38$, $p = 0.027$). The study concluded that there is no direct relationship between visual memory distortion and fantasy proneness, but visual memory distortion and fantasy proneness may share overlapping executive processes, in terms of strategy and organization, and possibly those involved in meaning and symbolic processing in memory, imagery and fantasy. Meaning and symbolic processing in memory and fantasy proneness were not assessed in this study, and appears to be one of the limitations in understanding both processes more thoroughly. However further research is needed to investigate these links. The ROCFT was also examined and discussed independently, with regards to its' measurement of visual memory distortion. Lastly initial normative data was also established and has been discussed for the ROCFT and the CEQ, for their possible use in the South African context.

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