

More than 86% of eyewitnesses of a crime discuss the incident with other witnesses. Meanwhile, numerous studies have shown that such a conversation can lead to a distortion of how the witness then recalls the observed situation. This phenomenon is called memory conformity. For instance, let's say that Christian saw the criminal fleeing the scene by a red car. What Christian observed during this event is called original information. After a while, Christian talked about what had happened with Regina, who was also a witness to the same event. However, Regina claimed that the offender ran away in a blue car. The information Regina passed on to Christian is called misinformation. Shortly afterwards Christian testified as a witness and during the interrogation he said that the criminal was driving a blue car. This means that during the interrogation, Christian used misinformation that he heard from someone else, instead of the original information that he himself had observed. The essential question posed in the planned research is: why is it so that the witness, although they themselves have observed certain information, if asked about this information, give answers consistent with what they heard from someone else?

In the present project it is planned to conduct three experiments. The aim of the first experiment is to verify the assumption that the memory conformity effect may occur for two reasons: (1) memory-related reasons, where misinformation damages the memory of the original information, making the person believe that they have seen what they actually have only heard from someone else, as well as (2) non-memory-related reasons, where a person has a correct memory concerning both the original information and the misinformation, meaning they are aware of the discrepancies between them but they respond in line with the latter. Such situation, although very interesting, has not been investigated so far in the context of memory conformity. Then why does it happen that a person who remembers what they saw give answers in line with what they heard during a discussion? Well, it was assumed that the major reason for succumbing to misinformation despite the correctness of one's recollections is distrust of one's own memory. Doubts about one's own memory can make a person prefer to rely on information from external sources (information obtained from other people) rather than on their own memories. Moreover, Experiment 1 also examines three individual characteristics: susceptibility to social influence, compliance, and suggestibility. It may be expected that the aforementioned variables will encourage susceptibility to the memory conformity effect occurring for non-memory reasons, as it is supposed that the tendency to rely on information taken from other people is due, among other things, to the high intensity of these traits.

Moreover, although exploration of techniques that reduce memory conformity should be an important area of studies concerning the discussed phenomenon, the literature contains some inconsistent results from studies devoted to this problem. Consequently, an analysis of the effectiveness of two techniques of immunization against this effect was planned: a warning that there could be a discrepancy between what a person saw and what they heard from someone else (Experiment 2) and reinforced self-affirmation (Experiment 3). Reinforced self-affirmation is a technique that increases self-confidence and in consequence improves the tendency to rely on one's memories for answers instead of on the misinformation. It was assumed that both of these techniques' effectiveness is mainly observed among people who remember both the original information and the misinformation, because increasing the tendency to rely on one's own memories by using a warning or reinforced self-affirmation requires the existence of such memories.

It may be expected that the results of the proposed studies will increase the knowledge about the memory conformity; it will also open a set of interesting questions for further research, and in the future it may contribute to improving the quality of witness testimony.