"disagreements about the interpreted latent contents" (sect. 3.2.2, para. 3). Rightly so; consider for example a recent study in which my colleagues and I (Bonanno et al. 2002) asked a sample of adolescent girls with documented CSA histories to describe in detail the most distressing events they had ever experienced. We made no mention in that interview of sexual abuse. However, we did follow with a second, more structured trauma interview in which for the first time we explicitly asked the girls about prior CSA. Consistent with other studies, one-third of the CSA survivors did not voluntarily disclose a past abuse experience. However, when we established a solid rapport and then later questioned them directly, all but two participants acknowledged the abuse.

What was particularly compelling was how much intentional nondisclosure *seemed* like repression. Nondisclosers exhibited greater nonverbal signs of shame. On the surface, this has the decidedly "psychoanalytic" feel of an unconscious expression of repressed abuse. Yet, shame has been shown to be an explicit gesture of appeasement – a nonverbal acknowledgment of a perceived moral transgression that the expresser is aware of, indeed painfully so, but would rather not talk about (Keltner & Buswell 1997; Tangney 1999). If the memory were truly repressed, such feelings would have been kept at bay.

Nondisclosers also made more non-Duchenne smiles. Genuine (Duchenne) smiles are marked by contraction of the muscles around the eyes and associated with genuine positive emotion. Non-Duchenne smiles are not accompanied by an experience of positive emotion and do not involve contraction around the eyes. Rather non-Duchenne smiles are polite social signals and often mask other emotions (Duchenne de Bologne, 1862; Ekman & Friesen 1982; Frank et al. 1993). But there is nothing unconscious about these expressions; whereas Duchenne smiles occur spontaneously, non-Duchenne smiles are best characterized as "deliberate attempts to influence the behavior or judgment of another person" (Bonanno et al. 2002, p. 97); in this case, to smooth over the intentional decision not to disclose a painful memory.

In the end, as Erdelyi notes, repression is just a word. But it is a word mired in imprecision, and unfortunately linked indelibly to the idea of the wholesale burial of traumatic memories. We can't forget the word, but we can frame it appropriately as a historical concept that should no longer hold spell over contemporary psychological theory.

What Erdelyi has repressed

Frederick Crews

Department of English, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720–1030.
fredc@berkeley.edu

Abstract: Erdelyi's "unified theory of repression" attempts to rehabilitate psychoanalytic doctrine by exaggerating its compatibility with the findings of cognitive science. In addition, Erdelyi treats Freud's writings as holy writ, any portion of which can be quoted to prove a point. He also relies on a long-discredited account of Freud's "seduction theory" and ignores important links between Freudian assumptions and our recent recovered memory movement.

Erdelyi's target article afforded him an opportunity to address the many grave objections that have dogged psychoanalytic knowledge claims, especially regarding memory. Instead, he has sought to *define away* the trouble. His "unified theory of repression" is not a theory but a transparent attempt to tuck one disputed tradition safely behind the skirts of a more scientifically respectable one. Ironically, his own concluding admonition constitutes the most appropriate verdict on his effort: "Progress by euphemistic relabelling or tendentious silences . . . is not scientific progress" (sect. 6, para. 2).

Erdelyi's contention is that nothing substantive is at stake among quarreling memory theorists. They needn't worry, for example, whether repression – whose authenticity he treats as axiomatic – operates consciously or unconsciously, because support for each of those clashing views can be found somewhere in Freud's writings. Once Erdelyi has embraced this remarkably unscientific approach to repression and, further, has emptied the concept of its controversial psychodynamic content, repression supposedly proves to be the very thing that cognitive researchers have isolated in their laboratories.

Erdelyi cannot show a consistent belief on Freud's part that repression operates both consciously and unconsciously. Rather, he cites "ambiguous" and "self-contradictory" passages indicating that Freud was confused and careless, indeed downright incoherent, on this point. But Erdelyi, like a biblical fundamentalist, assumes that whatever the holy text declares at any juncture must be based in reality. If Freud, however opportunistically, asserted both *x* and *not-x*, then the human mind itself must be so constituted as to enable both possibilities. QED.

Throughout Erdelyi's target article, we read of what Freud "discovered" and "realized" and "demonstrated" regarding memory. All such statements beg the question of how Freud corroborated his alleged findings. If he "demonstrated," for example, that dreams and jokes operate according to the same mechanisms, where did he take cognizance of other theories about those matters, and by what means did he show that his own explanations were more parsimonious and cogent than rival ones? How many subjects did he study experimentally, and what controls did he adopt against the risk of suggestion? Erdelyi contents himself with anecdotal single-case reports resembling Freud's own fast-and-loose, rhetorically coercive yarns.

Because Erdelyi reads Freud "biblically," he can overlook still another obstacle, namely, the difficulties the master encountered when applying his fatally vague concepts. Thus Erdelyi invests confidence in the theoretical apparatus of Breuer and Freud's *Studies on Hysteria* of 1895 without reflecting that, just a year later, Freud embraced a quite different conception of traumatic memory – a conception that he soon abandoned in favor of still another unsupported idea. Although Freud realized, serially, that his explanations had led to implausible corollaries and to therapeutic failure, he repeatedly clung to most features of the discredited theory and conjoined them with new, equally arbitrary, assertions about memory and trauma. At no point did he provide any empirical support for his shifting tenets. But Erdelyi endorses some of those tenets unquestioningly – being careful, however, to direct our gaze away from their idiosyncratic particulars.

Erdelyi takes pains to dissociate psychoanalytic doctrine from the modern recovered memory movement (even while quixotically citing some of its principal theorists as reliable experts on the nature of memory). Freud himself, according to Erdelyi, came to realize that the "problematical recollections of some of his early patients" (sect. 5, last para.) were merely fantasies. If only we had attended more carefully to Freud's warning against "the untrustworthiness of statements made by witnesses," Erdelyi writes, we could have spared ourselves our recent agony over false-memory accusations (sect. 5).

Erdelyi falls into several kinds of error here:

1. Modern recovered-memory cases have typically been generated not by "witnesses" whose recall may be faulty but by therapeutically induced convictions that such-and-such a misdeed *must have been* perpetrated long ago against the nonremembering patient, who *then* is coaxed into producing corresponding "memories" of the nonevent. This was precisely the reckless therapeutic style of Freud himself, both before and after he invented psychoanalysis.

2. Erdelyi overlooks important facts about Freud's "seduction" period that were established 20 years ago by a psychoanalytic investigator (Schimek 1987; see also Esterson 2001; Israëls & Schatzman 1993). Freud lied or misremembered when claiming,

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X06269115 Published online by Cambridge University Press

much later, that his "seduction" patients' stories had been mere fantasies. His three relevant papers of 1896 show unmistakably that the "stories" were Freud's own hypotheses, which he insistently tried to get his flabbergasted and protesting clients to corroborate. After that fiasco, he proceeded to build "psychoanalysis proper" on this very quicksand: the oedipal fantasies that he now purported to excavate were his own creation, largely recycled from his unsuccessful attempts to impose histories of early abuse on incredulous patients. From the outset, then, repression was nothing more than an excuse for misascribing Freud's own bizarre "stories" to other people's unconscious minds.

3. The psychoanalytic, as well as the prepsychoanalytic, Freud did lay claim to an ability to unearth veridical early memories through therapy. See, for example, the Wolf Man's alleged presence at a parental "primal scene" – an event that served a typically dramatic confirmatory function in Freud's case history, but that the patient himself later declared, convincingly, to have been Freud's implausible invention (Obholzer 1982).

4. Erdelyi overlooks a number of other traditional Freudian beliefs that were adapted by our recovered memory therapists: that repression explains why early experiences are inaccessible; that dredging up repressed traumas is the royal road to cure; that therapeutic suggestion can be safely discounted; that sexual experiences and thoughts are uniquely pathogenic; and that contemporary behaviors and dreams, once symbolically decoded, can reliably indicate the reality of otherwise unknown early events. Needless to say, all of this is sheer folklore, and very pernicious folklore, too.

The most rigorous studies of repression in its distinctively meaningful sense, as a mechanism that renders psychic contents inaccessible to consciousness, have found no believable evidence of its existence (e.g., Holmes 1990; Pope et al. 1999). Erdelyi's diluted and denatured version of the concept, however, would seem applicable to his own amnesia for obvious and often repeated objections to his views.

Freud did *not* anticipate modern reconstructive memory processes

Allen Esterson[a] and Stephen J. Ceci[b]

[a] *1A Cromwell Grove, Hammersmith, London W6 7RQ, United Kingdom;* [b] *Human Development, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.*

allenesterson@compuserve.com **http://www.esterson.org/**
sjc9@cornell.edu

Abstract: In this commentary, we challenge the claim that Freud's thinking anticipated Bartlettian reconstructive theories of remembering. Erdelyi has ignored important divergences that demonstrate it is not the case that "The constructions and reconstructions of Freud and Bartlett are the same but for motive" (target article, sect. 5).

In his article, Erdelyi writes about what "Freud's clinical experience revealed" (target article, Abstract) with no indication that he is aware that Freud's reporting of his clinical experiences has been called into question (Esterson 1993, pp. 11–93; Webster 1995, pp. 136–167). A case in point is Erdelyi's alluding, in section 5, to patients' "recollections" of early childhood experiences that Freud later construed as "imaginary memories" (Freud 1906a/1953, p. 274). Modern scholarship has shown to be false the received story that in 1895–1897 most of Freud's patients told him they had been sexually abused in early childhood (Cioffi 1974/1998; Eissler 2001, pp. 94–117; Esterson 1993, pp. 11–31; 1998; 2001; 2006; Israëls & Schatzman 1993; Scharnberg 1993, pp. 113–268; Schimek 1987). In this same sentence cited by Erdelyi, Freud writes that the repression of patients' childhood memories (of infantile masturbation) results in "phantasies (or imaginary memories)" being "produced during the years of puberty." So, on Freud's theory, (analytically inferred) unconscious "memories" of infantile masturbation metamorphose into (analytically reconstructed) "unconscious [sexual abuse] phantasies" at a specific age, a mysterious process that is scarcely consistent with Bartlettian reconstructive theories.

Erdelyi supports his claim of the Bartlettian nature of Freud's conceiving that "what is accessible to memory is never the true unfettered information" by quoting (in sect. 5, para. 10) as follows: "Re-activated memories . . . never re-emerge into consciousness unchanged" (Freud 1896a/1962, p. 170). The remainder of Freud's sentence reads: "what becomes conscious as obsessional ideas and affects, and take the place of the pathogenic memories so far as conscious life is concerned, are structures in the nature of a *compromise* between the repressed ideas and the repressing ones." So what Freud is discussing are not Bartlettian distortions of memory, but the wholesale conversion of a supposedly repressed memory of an infantile sexual experience into something very different – obsessive actions and ideas that bear no obvious relationship to the experience. Two pages later Freud provides a clinical example: "A psychical analysis" (of obsessive behaviour) "shows that . . . they can always be fully explained by being traced back to the obsessional memories which they are fighting against" (Freud 1896a/1962, p. 172). In a footnote Freud then outlines an analysis of the bedtime rituals of an obsessional patient, tendentiously interpreting each element in the rituals to be consistent with the patient's having been sexually abused in infancy by a servant girl, in line with his preconceived theory of obsessional neurosis at that time (see Esterson 1998, pp. 4–6; 2001, pp. 332–33; 2006). So, on Freud's theory, the "re-activated memories" that Erdelyi cites are manifested in the form of obsessive rituals, a process that can scarcely be said to illustrate Bartlettian reconstructive processes.

In the same paragraph (sect. 5, para. 10), Erldelyi alludes to Freud's notion of "substitute formations" (Freud 1915a/1957, p. 154) as illustrative of his Bartlettian credentials. The passage in question relates to the supposed repression of an idea that represents an instinct, with the resultant production of affect, such as anxiety (Freud 1915a/1957, p. 153). The example Freud provides immediately afterwards (p. 155), taken from the Wolf Man case history, involves an infant boy's "libidinal attitude towards the father" being "subjected to repression," resulting, by some mysterious process of "displacement along a chain of connections which is determined in a particular way," into phobic anxiety about wolves: "The result is fear of a wolf, instead of a demand for love from the father" (p. 155). The motive force for the repression was fear of castration, which Freud describes as "one of the commonest and strongest motives for repression" (1933/1960, p. 87). It is difficult to see much relation between this process and Bartlettian theories of memory. (See Esterson 2003, pp. 158–159.)

Another of Erdelyi's citations (sect. 5) purportedly demonstrating Bartlettian processes (Freud 1899/1962, p. 155) relates to Freud's theory of "retrogressive screen memories," which involves the repression of a contemporary idea and its projection back onto an early childhood memory trace to produce an enhanced memory (Esterson 2003, p. 157). However, the "screen memories" process as described by Freud depends heavily on the acceptance of his analytic interpretative procedure. An early memory of the yellow color of flowers has been enhanced by the repression of later sexual fantasies: "Taking flowers away from a girl means to deflower her" (1899/1962, p. 316); a memory of a childhood tooth extraction has been enhanced by the repression of memories of masturbation (1900/1953, pp. 390–391). Moreover, the memory is "formed" at a specific time (1899/1962, p. 322), in contrast with Bartlettian schematic modification of memory, in which each retelling further alters the features of the encoded event (Bruck et al. 2002).

The remaining citation from Freud's writings in the paragraph in question (sect. 5, para. 10), that pertaining to "false

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X06269115 Published online by Cambridge University Press