care for a neighbor's child when the baby-sitter couldn't come") is consistent with one's self-view, and one can easily imagine behaving in such a kind manner. Thus, low self-threat feedback is processed deeply. A substantial degree of elaboration occurs, resulting in an increased number of retrieval routes and, hence, better recall.

In our typical experiment, participants are presented with 32 behaviors that are either positive or negative and exemplify either central (i.e., trustworthy, kind) or peripheral (i.e., modest, uncomplaining) self-aspects. Half of the participants are instructed to think of the description as based on actual knowledge that familiar others have of them, whereas the other half are told that the description refers to another person named Chris. The typical finding (Sedikides & Green 2000, Experiment 2) is that participants remember relatively poorly self-threatening (i.e., negative central self-referent) behaviors. This finding has been replicated in a situation of relatively high mundane realism, in which the feedback was based on an ostensibly valid personality test (Sedikides & Green 2000, Experiment 1). The finding has been labeled the mnemic neglect effect and is taken as evidence of self-defense. This effect is conceptually equivalent to inhibitory repression, which, according to Erdelyi, involves "cognitive avoidance (not-thinking)" of threatening material and "leads to loss of accessible memory" (sect. 1, para. 2).

Subsequent experiments have established that self-threat drives the mnemic neglect effect. Sedikides and Green (2004) have shown that feedback negativity (indicating self-threat), rather than feedback inconsistency, is responsible for mnemic neglect. Green and Sedikides (2004) have shown that the effect is obtained when the behaviors are diagnostic (indicating self-threat) rather than non-diagnostic of the underlying trait. Finally, Green et al. (2005) have shown that the effect is present when the negative feedback is targeted toward unmodifiable self-aspects (indicating self-threat) rather than modifiable self-aspects.

Inhibitory repression, according to Erdelyi, involves cognitive avoidance, or not-thinking. Does the mnemic neglect effect also involve not-thinking? Sedikides and Green (2000, Experiment 3) manipulated behavior reading time by presenting behaviors one at a time on computer screens: Some participants were given ample time (i.e., 8 seconds per behavior); others, limited time (i.e., 2 seconds per behavior). The mnemic neglect effect was replicated in the former condition but was absent in the latter. When in a not-thinking (i.e., limited time) condition, participants neglect all behaviors, not just self-threatening ones. This pattern is consistent with Erdelyi's conceptualization of inhibitory repression.

What happens to neglected memories? Are they lost or available and recoverable? Erdelyi argues that memories can be recovered with retrieval effort or alternative techniques. We employed such a technique, recognition accuracy (Green, Sedikides & Gregg 2006). Participants were provided with the usual 32 behaviors and asked to recall them. Next, they were provided with a new set of similar 32 behaviors and asked to recognize them (i.e., state whether each of the 64 behaviors was previously presented). The results were informative. The mnemic neglect effect was replicated in recall but not recognition. That is, recognition accuracy did not differ as a function of feedback self-threat. It appears that self-threatening information was available in memory and accessible through the technique of recognition. This pattern is congruent with Erdelyi's theorizing.

In summary, our laboratory research on normal adults validates Erdelyi's mechanism of inhibitory repression (i.e., mnemic neglect effect) and extends it. This mechanism occurs in normal adults, in reference to the self, and in relatively high-threat situations (i.e., diagnostic feedback targeted to unmodifiable central self-aspects). Importantly, though, even what we labeled "self-threatening" feedback does not appear to be terribly self-threatening. Although in one experiment it was ostensibly based on a computer-administered personality test, in all other experiments it was based on hypothetical feedback. Also, in all cases, it referred to a mere likelihood of the person performing an undesirable behavior. We conclude that normal adults are remarkably intolerant even to the potential of self-threat: They hastily deploy the mechanism of inhibitory repression or mnemic neglect to ward off relatively innocuous signs of self-threat.

Repression, suppression, and oppression (in depression)

Golan Shahar

Department of Behavioral Sciences, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Beer-Sheva, 84105, Israel.

shaharg@bgu.ac.il

Abstract: Erdelyi's two key tenets – that repression may be conscious ("suppression") and that it is context-sensitive – resonate well with findings on unipolar depression. Drawing from this field, I argue that (1) "oppression," namely, pressure from significant others to refrain from attending to certain mental contents, influences individuals' repression/suppression; and that, (2) individuals actively create the very contexts that facilitate their repression/suppression.

Following Erdelyi's example of integrating clinical and research material, I would like to resurrect a previously published clinical case (Shahar 2004). Ms. J., a 55-year old woman, was referred to psychotherapy following a severe major depressive episode. An ambitious public relations agent, she always emphasized self-control, achievement, and self-sufficiency over issues of interpersonal relatedness. This she did as a response to tremendous pressure exerted from members of her family of origin, who continuously conveyed to her that being weak and needy was reprehensible. She left home at the age of 15, successfully graduated from high school and college, and developed a fulfilling professional life.

What was repressed/suppressed by Ms. J. was an array of mental contents (thoughts, feelings, wishes), pertaining to dependency needs; specifically, her needs to feel nurtured, protected, and cared for. Such repression/suppression was strikingly evident in her marital relationship. She met her husband in college and married him shortly after they had begun dating. In treatment, she described him as a kind, gentle, and emotionally stable man, yet, claimed she had never loved him and was quite puzzled as to why she remained in the relationship. It took her some therapeutic working through (cf. Freud 1914a/1958), to realize that her (repressed/suppressed) dependency, meeting her husband's dependability, served as the driving force of their marriage. Consistent with Erdelyi's position whereby "repression" need not be unconscious, it is plausible that Ms. J. consciously and deliberately refrained from getting in contact with her dependency. For instance, she vividly recalled her vowing "not to trust anyone but herself" (Shahar 2004, p. 372) and alluded to repeated efforts on her part to disavow needing, longing, and belonging.

The benefit of Erdelyi's theoretical postulate is twofold. First, it links research and clinical discourse on defense mechanisms with conceptualization and research on automatic – but conscious – cognitive processing. Considering, for example, Tzelgov's (1997) position that "Automatic but conscious: That is how we act most of the time," and his distinction between intentional (i.e., goal-oriented) and autonomous automatic processing (pp. 218–219), neither of which have to be unconscious, it follows that repression/suppression, particularly when used as a defense mechanism, constitutes a powerful example of intentional automatic processing.

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Second, the intentional nature of defense mechanisms highlights their interpersonal nature. The decision to attend, or not to attend, to various mental contents is very much influenced by what significant others deem appropriate or not. This is obvious in Ms. J.'s case, given that her family members explicitly conveyed to her the reprehensibility of dependency. Two theoretical and empirical contributions, both of which aim to account for the fact that women are twice as prone as men are at being diagnosed as suffering from unipolar depression, indirectly allude to the interpersonal nature of repression/suppression. Nolen-Hoeksema (1990) theorized that men are likely to respond to emotional distress by distracting behavior that short-circuits depression, whereas women are likely to engage in self-focus ruminating attention, which ultimately exacerbates their depression. As acknowledged by Nolen-Hoeksema (1990, p. 276), the origins of these different response styles are likely to be social, constituted through stereotypes (i.e., women are passive and emotional) and amalgamated in the context of family relations (women are discouraged from being active and assertive). Similarly, Jack's (1999) self-silencing theory holds that depressed women tend to "silence" (in cognitive terms – not attend to) self-aspects that are perceived to compromise close relations. This, in turn, leads to an increase in women's hopelessness about "the possibility of genuine relationships or self-expression" (Jack 1999, p. 226), ultimately leading to depression. Both theoretical positions point to the possibility that social norms, expectations, and rules, impact individuals' attention and memory, leading to lowering of consciousness toward important mental contents, and in turn leading to self-alienation and depression. Hopefully, this succinct presentation will convince the reader that, at least in the case of unipolar depression, interpersonal and political oppression, operating at the cognitive level, is implicated in repression and suppression.

Further intriguing is Erdelyi's postulate, whereby repression/suppression is context sensitive. Espousing $\varepsilon \neq \varepsilon \mid [\varepsilon]$, where $\varepsilon||I||$ is the manifest content of the stimulus, $[\varepsilon||I||]$ is the context, and $\varepsilon \mid [\varepsilon]||I||$ is its latent content, Erdelyi proposes that defense mechanisms – particularly denial – are predicted by the person's failure to construe a stimulus (e.g., an event) in its proper context of meaning. In acknowledgment that repressed/suppressed mental contents are frequently enacted in relations (i.e., Freud's return of the repressed occurs in the interpersonal arena), I would like to argue that (1) people fail to grasp the meaning of these mental contents because they are eluded by some features of the social context, features which (2) they themselves created. Consider Ms. J. once again: her strong, albeit repressed/suppressed, dependency needs were constantly enacted in relationships where she repeatedly sought support and reassurance. Yet, she remained unaware of this because of her attentiveness to the boredom (in her marital relationships) and acrimony (in her relationships with therapists) summoned by these interpersonal exchanges. Ironically, it was she who actively contributed to this boredom (for instance, by putting an emotional rift between her husband and herself) and acrimony (e.g., by constantly provoking and challenging friends and therapists; see Shahar 2004). Ms. J.'s behavior, highly consistent with action perspectives of psychopathology (Shahar 2001; 2006), suggests that she actively contributed, if unwittingly, to the very social context that consolidated her repression/suppression of dependency needs.

To conclude, in drawing from research and clinical accounts of unipolar depression, I observe that (1) repression/suppression are influenced by social pressures exerted by significant others (i.e., "oppression"), and (2) this and other defense mechanisms are maintained by people being eluded by interpersonal circumstances they themselves created. These observations are made in an attempt to add an interpersonal touch to Erdelyi's intriguing, but largely cognitive, "unified theory of repression," so as to further appreciate the complex associations between cognition, power, and psychopathology.

Resolving repression

Steven M. Smith

Department of Psychology, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-4235.

stevesmith@tamu.edu **http://people.tamu.edu/~stevesmith/**

Abstract: The feuding factions of the memory wars, that is, those concerned with the validity of recovered memories versus those concerned with false memories, are unified by Erdelyi's theory of repression. Evidence shows suppression, inhibition, and retrieval blocking can have profound yet reversible effects on a memory's accessibility, and deserve as prominent a role in the recovered memory debate as evidence of false memories. Erdelyi's theory shows that both inhibitory and elaborative processes cooperate to keep unwanted memories out of consciousness.

Repression has long been the battleground in psychology's family feud. No other issue has seen such contentious and emotional brawling among psychologists as the question of repression. Once seen as merely an academic debate, the memory wars now rage with such intensity not only because of theoretical disagreements and empirical squabbles, but because there have been very real victims of the war – victims of true physical and sexual abuse, and victims unjustly accused of abuse that did not actually occur. In his treatment of this divisive question, Erdelyi negotiates a peace plan for the feuding factions by reviewing the disparate views and contentions, integrating the relevant ideas and findings, correcting persistent misunderstandings, and synthesizing his unified theory of repression.

The essence of Erdelyi's theory unifies the warring factions of the memory wars by accepting and synthesizing the two positions. Erdelyi states that "repression is divided into two subclasses: (1) *inhibitory* or *subtractive processes* (e.g., degrading the 'signal'), and (2) *elaborative* or *additive processes* (e.g., adding 'noise' to the signal)" (sect. 3.1, para. 3). Erdelyi envisions these two subclasses, avoidance and distortion, not as adversarial processes, as has been assumed by the false memory debate, but rather as processes that cooperate in the service of defensive emotion regulation. This synthesis makes a lot of sense.

Some of the misunderstandings have occurred because of verbal labels. Examples of problematic labels include distinctions among the terms "repression," "suppression," and "inhibition." Erdelyi indicates that if we drop the bogus requirement that repression must be caused by unconscious mechanisms, these terms are essentially synonymous. There may be reason, however, to distinguish suppression from inhibition, even if both are important mechanisms that serve to keep unwanted thoughts and memories out of consciousness. Whereas Wegner has used the term "suppression" to refer to a temporary means of keeping thoughts out of mind (e.g., Wegner 1989), Anderson and his colleagues have used the term "inhibition" to mean the resultant effect on a memory following repeated suppression of a memory retrieval (e.g., Anderson et al. 1994; Anderson & Green 2001).

Some misunderstandings in the memory wars have been caused by conceptual disagreements. Erdelyi decouples the concepts of "defense" and "repression," indicating that repression, as a mechanism, might or might not be engaged for the purpose of defensive emotion regulation. Psychologists who focus on the mechanisms of repression can study those mechanisms independently of defensive coping purposes. This understanding is important not only for investigating the mechanisms that underlie forgetting, such as suppression, inhibition, and blocking, but also for investigations that give rise to elaborative repression, such as false memories and memory attribution errors.

Some misunderstandings have persisted because of limited empirical evidence, or more often, because some types of laboratory research have not been commonly associated with the repression debate. The relevance of false memory research done in the laboratory to the repression debate has been made abundantly and compellingly clear by such investigators as Loftus, Roediger, and many others. Empirical studies of forgetting and recovered

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