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

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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

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recollections" (Freud 1901/1960, p. 6), relates specifically to his theory of the forgetting of proper names. The quoted words concern a rather far-fetched analysis he has just given of the forgetting of a person's name and its (tentative) replacement by a different one. However, the "mechanism of false recollection" as described here requires a process of repression, not one of modification over time. Moreover, Timpanaro has examined this very example that Freud uses to exemplify his theory of the forgetting of names, and shown that it can be explained perfectly adequately without appealing to Freudian repression processes (Timpanaro 1976, pp. 63–65, 70–71, 75–77, 85–89).

Although Erdelyi is correct in noting the similarity between reconstructions based on emotional motives and those based on cognitive schemes, neither of these incremental reconstructive biases resemble the production of erroneous memories as described in the passages he cites. Of course it is possible to highlight certain elements in Freud's writings about memory that overlap with Bartlettian theories (e.g., his saying that "recall is an amalgam of fact and fiction"), but if the full context of Freud's accounts are taken into consideration, it is apparent that every one of the truncated quotations that Erdelyi cites in the paragraph in question relates to theories of memory that bear little relationship to Bartlettian reconstructive processes over time.

The social psychology of cognitive repression

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Abstract: Erdelyi identifies cognitive and emotional motives for repression, but largely neglects social motivations. Yet social pressure to not know, and implicit needs to isolate awareness in order to protect relationships, are common motives. Social motives may even trump emotional motives; the most painful events are sometimes the most difficult to repress. Cognitive repression may be impacted by social information sharing.

That people sometimes distort, omit, deny – *repress*[1] – information is indeed obvious, as articulated in Erdelyi's insightful and timely target article. But *why* do individuals repress information? Erdelyi explicitly refers to only two categories of motive: cognitive and emotional. Erdelyi has neglected a third important category of motive for repression: social. Social motives include all the reasons individuals repress as a consequence of social pressures to not know and to doubt memories, and in response to an implicit need to isolate information from awareness in order to maintain a whole host of social (intimate, communal, political) relationships.

Campbell (2003) notes that "political struggles over memory are extraordinarily intense" (p. 52). Whether a struggle over memory for the events witnessed at Mai Lai (Freyd 2001) or the more mundane experience of discussing experiences of the day, social response to testimony will shape what is remembered (Fivush et al. 1997). Sometimes forgetting and unawareness are explicitly encouraged by others – for instance, when harmful events are perpetrated by one person or group of people on another with manipulations to reduce the subsequent disclosure and memory of those events (Veldhuis & Freyd 1997).

Individuals are sometimes exposed to information that may endanger their well-being. In such cases, repression may be adaptive. Childhood abuse perpetrated by a caregiver is an example. Betrayal trauma theory (BTT; Freyd 1994; 1996; 2001; see Fig. 1) proposes that the way in which events are processed and remembered will be related to the degree to which a negative event represents a betrayal by a trusted, needed other (Sivers et al. 2002). Full awareness of such abuse may only increase the victim's risk by motivating withdrawal or confrontation with the perpetrator, thus risking a relationship vital to the victim's survival.

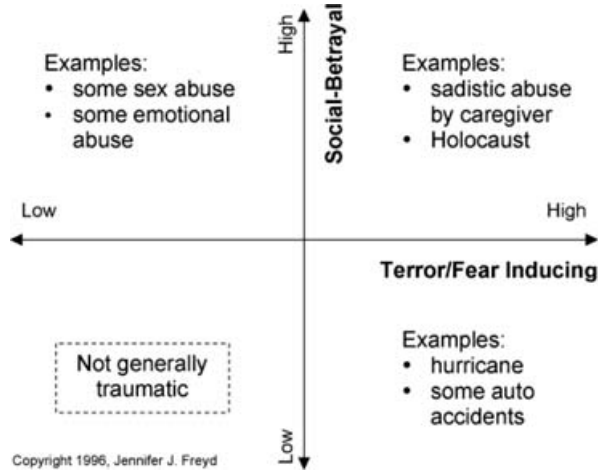


Figure 1 (Freyd). Two-Dimensional Model for Traumatic Events. Social betrayal is hypothesized to be associated with greater unawareness and reduced recall.

BTT posits that knowledge isolation is predicted by the threat the information poses to the individual's attachment system. Studies indicate reduced recall in the case of abuse by caregivers or close others (e.g., Edwards et al. 2001; Freyd et al. 2001; Schultz et al. 2003; Stoler 2001; Sheiman 1999; Williams 1995; for additional analyses see Freyd 1996). Freyd et al. (2001) found that physical and sexual abuse perpetrated by a caregiver was related to higher levels of self-reported less persistent memories of abuse compared to non-caregiver abuse (see Fig. 2).

Exposure to high-betrayal traumas is also associated with higher levels of dissociative tendencies (Chu & Dill 1990; DePrince 2005; Plattner et al. 2003). Dissociation, like repression, may help keep betrayal information out of awareness. DePrince and Freyd (2004) found that under divided-attention, high dissociators have impaired memory for words associated with trauma (e.g., incest) but not for neutral words, as compared with low dissociators. Similarly, Becker-Blease et al. (2004) found that, under divided attention, abused children remembered fewer abuse-charged pictures relative to non-abused children.

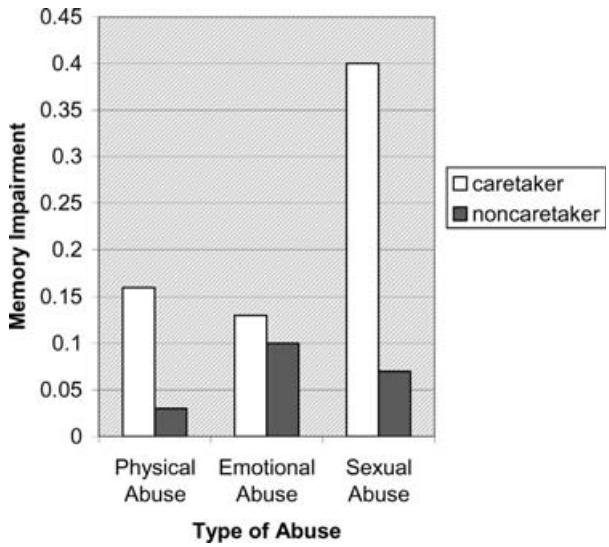


Figure 2 (Freyd). Average memory impairment (reduced recall range is 0 for excellent memory to 1.0 for very poor memory for abuse) for caretaker (high betrayal) and non-caretaker (lower betrayal) sexual, physical, and emotional abuse. (Results from Freyd et al. 2001.)

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