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Depression, implicit memory, and self: A revised memory model of emotion

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Abstract

Cognitive constructs are explored for clinical psychologists interested in cognitive phenomena in depression. Both traditional and modern memory constructs are outlined and described with attention to their contribution to understanding depression. In particular, the notions of memory construction, self-schemas, and autobiographical memory (per [Conway, M.A. (2001). Sensory–perceptual episodic memory and its context: Autobiographical memory. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London: Biological Sciences*, 356, 1375–1384.]) are discussed. Then, the phenomenon of implicit memory is described as a way to bring these constructs together to understand depression. The Rehm and Naus (1990) [Rehm, L.P., and Naus, M.J. (1990). A memory model of emotion. In Ingram, R.E. (Ed.), *Contemporary Psychological Approaches to Depression* (pp. 23–35). New York: Plenum Press.] memory model of emotion is updated and expanded to include these cognitive constructs, and depression is viewed from the perspective of understanding interactions between explicit and implicit memory processes.

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1. Introduction

The past two decades have witnessed an increased interest in partnering cognitive psychological theories with models of emotion, especially theories of depression (Bower, 1981, 1987; Clark & Teasdale, 1985; Rehm & Naus, 1990; Teasdale & Fogarty, 1979; Teasdale & Russell, 1983). During this same period, some cognitive researchers began to focus their attention on the study of implicit memory, or memory without awareness (e.g., Parkin, 1993; Roediger, 1990; Schacter, 1987). Consequently, quite a few empirical studies examining the impact of depression on implicit memory were published during this same period. Barry, Naus, and Rehm (2004) recently presented an in-depth review of the mood-congruent memory literature on depression and implicit memory, critically evaluating and organizing these studies within a cognitive framework. In general, however, there has been a delay in including the phenomenon of implicit memory into cognitive theories of emotion. The Barry et al. (2004) review was an attempt to draw attention to emotion and implicit memory, and it also served to set the stage for the current paper.

The purpose of the current paper is to explore the possible implications of the implicit memory literature on depression using the Rehm and Naus (1990) memory model of emotion. This model originally used memory as the center of the cognitive and emotional systems, and it understood depression as a result of cognitive processes, especially through the allocation of attention. The paper is organized as follows: (1) an overview of the memory system is presented, including the cognitive framework of transfer appropriate processing, the concept of implicit memory and the concepts of autobiographical memory and self; (2) three important memory models of emotion (associative network models, the strategic processing model, and schema models) are reviewed in the context of a cognitive framework; (3) a reformulation of the Rehm and Naus (1990) memory model of emotion is presented, including the recent cognitive psychological concepts of implicit memory and the self-memory system (per Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000); and (4) the implications of these issues to memory models of emotion and to understanding the development and maintenance of depression are discussed. In accomplishing these goals, two prominent themes guide this paper and can be found threaded through each section: the theme of structure and process and the role of knowledge base schemas. Each of these cognitive constructs is first defined and discussed in the next section.

2. Cognitive constructs

A central aspect of cognitive psychology has always been memory—traditionally explicit memory, or memory requiring conscious recollection (see Lachman, Lachman, & Butterfield, 1979 for an introduction and Neath, 1998 for a more recent review). Cognitive psychologists interested in studying memory have historically conceptualized the memory system in terms of its cognitive structures and processes (i.e., Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968; Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977).

2.1. *Explicit memory*

2.1.1. *Structure*

Memory structures are described as cognitive stores that are differentiable in terms of their characteristic features and are typically categorized as sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory. Sensory memory represents the point at which information first enters the cognitive

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