



Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong

香港大學心理學系

Brown Bag Lunchtime Seminar
(Theme: Social and Health Psychology)

Emotion Regulation Promotes Forgetting of Negative Social Feedback

12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. | July 18, 2023 (Tuesday)
Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



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Abstract

Unwanted memories associated with negative social feedback often lead to prolonged emotional distress, posing a threat to individuals' psychological well-being and social functioning. Effective control of these unwanted memories is crucial for maintaining mental health and emotional well-being. During this seminar, I will present two studies that investigate the impact of emotion regulation on forgetting negative social feedback.

Study 1 examined whether engaging in emotion regulation strategies (cognitive reappraisal and distraction) during the encoding of social feedback diminishes its subsequent recall. The results revealed that both strategies reduced negative emotional reactivity while facilitating forgetting of negative social feedback. Furthermore, individual differences in depressive symptoms influenced event-related potentials (ERPs) and cortical electroencephalogram (EEG) patterns during emotion regulation, suggesting that individuals with higher depressive symptoms may benefit more from distraction than reappraisal in regulating emotions arising from negative social feedback.

Study 2 explored whether reappraisal of negative social feedback after initial encoding could promote subsequent retrieval suppression and voluntary forgetting. Behaviorally, using reappraisal to distance oneself from negative social feedback facilitated its voluntary forgetting. The findings from ERP and time-domain condition-level decoding indicated that reappraisal triggered increased engagement of inhibitory control processes during retrieval suppression, thereby enhancing memory control effectiveness and ultimately facilitating the voluntary forgetting of negative social feedback.

These two studies provide novel evidence supporting the efficacy of emotion regulation strategies during memory encoding and retrieval stages in facilitating the forgetting of unwanted social feedback. The findings contribute to our theoretical understanding of memory control in social contexts and have practical implications for safeguarding mental well-being, especially for individuals experiencing mental distress due to difficulties in spontaneously forgetting self-threatening information.

About the speaker

Hui is a Ph.D. candidate under the supervision of Dr. Xiaoqing Hu. Her research interests mainly focus on the neurocognitive mechanisms of emotional memory regulation and social feedback processing. Specifically, she has been researching strategies and approaches to promote the forgetting of unwanted memories, particularly negative social feedback. She utilizes EEGs to study the temporal dynamics and cortical patterns during cognitive processes and employs non-invasive brain stimulation techniques to investigate the key brain regions involved in emotion regulation and memory control functions.

Zoom (For participants who couldn't attend the Seminar in person)

<https://hku.zoom.us/j/3951550048?pwd=SncvL3RYakEycUtpL29vdDJEEdlEwdz09>

Meeting ID: 395 155 0048 | Password: psyc



~All are Welcome~

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