**Written Assignment Unit 4**

University of the People

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**Repressed Memories: A Controversial Terrain**

The concept of repressed memories—where traumatic experiences are unconsciously blocked to shield individuals from psychological distress—has been a contentious topic within psychology. In the 1990s, numerous cases emerged where individuals, often during therapy, "recovered" memories of childhood abuse, leading to legal actions against alleged perpetrators. However, the authenticity of these repressed memories has been widely debated.

**Case Study: The George Franklin Trial**

A notable instance is the 1990 trial of George Franklin, who was convicted based on his daughter Eileen's recovered memory of him murdering her childhood friend, Susan Nason, two decades earlier. Eileen's recollection surfaced during therapy, leading to her father's conviction. However, the conviction was later overturned due to concerns about the reliability of repressed memories and potential suggestive therapeutic techniques that might have implanted false memories.

**Circumstances Leading to the Surfacing of Repressed Memories**

Repressed memories often resurface during therapeutic sessions, especially when techniques like hypnosis, guided imagery, or age regression are employed. These methods aim to unlock hidden memories but can sometimes lead to the creation of false memories due to their suggestive nature. Additionally, significant life events or sensory triggers—such as specific sounds, smells, or locations—can spontaneously bring repressed memories to consciousness.

**Potential Effects of Resurfacing Repressed Memories**

The emergence of repressed memories can have profound psychological impacts. For some, it offers clarity and a path toward healing past traumas. However, for others, it can lead to increased distress, confusion, and the potential for false accusations, especially if the memories are not accurate. The process can strain relationships and disrupt one's sense of reality, underscoring the importance of handling such situations with professional care.

**Personal Beliefs on Memory Repression**

The human mind possesses mechanisms to cope with overwhelming trauma, and repression might serve as a defense to protect individuals from unbearable pain. While some repressed memories could be genuine, the malleable nature of human memory makes it susceptible to suggestion and distortion. Therefore, it's crucial to approach recovered memories with a balance of openness and skepticism, ensuring that therapeutic practices are grounded in scientific evidence to prevent potential harm.

**Conclusion**

The debate over repressed memories highlights the intricate relationship between trauma and memory. While some individuals may genuinely recover forgotten traumatic experiences, the risk of suggestive therapeutic techniques leading to false memories cannot be ignored. It's essential for mental health professionals to employ evidence-based practices and for the legal system to critically evaluate the reliability of repressed memories in judicial proceedings.

**References**

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