

Preface

The past two decades have witnessed an enormous burst of activity as investigators have attempted to gain a better understanding of memory. Although there are a number of excellent books available summarizing the knowledge that we have acquired so far, it is fair to say that almost every important construct in the literature remains the focus of a major theoretical controversy. Is the central metaphor for memory dynamics "organization" or "interference"? Is the act of remembering reproductive or reconstructive? Is the relationship between perception and memory best characterized by "depth of processing," "encoding specificity," or something else? Is there really a distinction between recall and recognition? Does memory possess a unitary structure, or is it composed of multiple storage systems such as short-term and long-term memory, or episodic and semantic memory? Despite all this activity, therefore, it is not altogether clear how much we know for certain about the processes involved in remembering and forgetting.

Part of the problem is that until very recently, most investigations of memory involved college students performing relatively trivial tasks under sterile laboratory conditions. Although this practice may have been ideal for some lines of research, in the final analysis it has placed severe limitations on our vision of memory: first, because few laboratory paradigms adequately represent memory as it is experienced and employed in everyday life; and second, because much more remembering is observed than forgetting. In this respect the current "Bartlett revival," with its interest in memory for extended prose and other meaningful material as well as in the occurrence of systematic distortions in memory, has been a tonic for the discipline—despite the conceptual ambiguities of schema theory.

It is our conviction that the study of amnesia—broadly construed—similarly illuminates aspects of remembering and forgetting that are obscured in conventional laboratory investigations of memory, and that amnesia can serve as an important proving ground for advances in memory theory. Others in the field seem to agree, as many investigators have become increasingly interested in the pathology of memory. However, this interest has been focused on those memory disorders that are associated with specific lesions or other definite disease processes in the central nervous system—Korsakoff's syndrome and similar amnesias, aphasia, dementia, and the like. Another domain, which encompasses the "functional" amnesias, has been virtually ignored. Yet these amnesias are frequently encountered in the clinic, the laboratory, and in everyday life; and they clearly represent subjectively compelling disruptions in the operation of memory. Research on at least some of these topics has progressed at a rapid pace, but the relevant literature remains scattered and difficult to access and has not been sufficiently integrated with the theories and constructs emerging from laboratory research on normal memory.

The aim of this volume, then, is to present a comprehensive account of the current state of knowledge concerning the functional disorders of memory. Each of the contributors to the volume has provided a summary of the results of research in a given topic area with emphasis on his or her own particular interests or program of investigation. The resulting papers cover such clinical phenomena as dissociative amnesia, momentary forgetting by patients in psychotherapy, and repression; amnesias associated with special states of consciousness such as convulsive seizure activity, sleep, hypnosis, and general anesthesia, as well as drug-induced, state-dependent learning; and disorders and anomalies observed in normal waking consciousness outside the laboratory and clinic, such as depersonalization and *déjà vu*, infantile and childhood amnesia, and the memory deficit observed in the aged. Almost all the work discussed involves human subjects, although in two cases—infantile/childhood amnesia and state-dependent learning—there are investigations of the phenomena in infrahuman species that cannot be ignored. We did not mean by our choice of title to revive the old "organic vs. functional" dispute in psychiatry and neurology, but only to specify a certain subset of phenomena within the pathology of memory where physiological considerations are less dominant; in fact, many of the authors have offered speculations concerning the psychobiological aspects of their topics.

We explicitly requested that our authors integrate the various phenomena and their theoretical accounts of them with the wider literature on normal memory. In each case, it turns out that the functional disorders of memory speak directly to one or more current theoretical debates. Consideration of both the anomalies of memory encountered in the psychopathology of everyday life and the memory difficulties observed in the aged call for reconsideration of the relationships between recall and recognition, and between the episodic and semantic components of memory. Research on infantile and childhood amnesia, traumatic

amnesia, and the effects of anesthesia support the notion that encoding conditions, especially the extent to which the new memory is processed at the time of perception, are especially critical for later remembering. Other phenomena, such as dream recall and state dependency, illustrate the importance of similarity between the contexts in which learning and remembering take place. Studies of repression, including momentary forgetting during psychotherapy, remind us that memories possess motivational and affective qualities as well as spatio-temporal and linguistic features and that these relationships with personality can affect recall in important ways. The clinical cases of hysteria, fugue, and multiple personality indicate that memories can be rendered unconscious in other ways besides repression; and hypnosis, as well as other altered states of awareness, provides techniques for the study of divided consciousness.

The individual chapters, then, do not merely reflect the theoretical advances already made in other subdisciplines of memory and cognition. By providing perspectives on memory that are not available to the investigator who focuses on "normal" cognition as manifested in the usual sorts of laboratory experiments, they contribute directly to the development of a more adequate account of the processes involved in remembering and forgetting. The papers in this volume, and the volume itself, are meant to be construed as questions rather than answers. For that reason, we have decided not to provide the kind of integrative summary chapter that is usually expected from editors. The range of phenomena covered and the questions they pose for our understanding of memory are too diverse to permit any concise summary; and the state of contemporary cognitive psychology is such that it would be premature to offer much in the way of theoretical speculation.

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