

How Does our Memory Influence the Self?

Memory, often regarded as the cornerstone of our existence, shapes every aspect of our lives, from the mundane to the extraordinary (Baddeley, 1999). Yet, despite its fundamental importance, memory remains a realm that is often misunderstood and underestimated. Consider this: Have you ever found yourself struggling to recall a cherished memory or questioning the accuracy of a vivid recollection? This common experience underscores the complex and multifaceted nature of memory processes. It is within this diverse field of memory that IdentityCraft seeks to navigate, offering a guiding light for individuals seeking to take charge of their identity. By unraveling the mysteries of memory and its impact on our sense of self, IdentityCraft aims to empower individuals to harness that transformative potential of memory, transforming it from a passive recollection into an active tool for crafting a more authentic and intentional identity.

Memory refers to the ability of the brain to store, retain, and recall information. It is an important aspect of cognitive function and plays a vital role in various mental processes. Memory is typically categorized into three main branches, based on the duration of retention. Sensory memory is a brief form of memory that holds sensory information for a short period of time and allows us to retain sensory impressions of different stimuli like what we hear or see for a fraction of a second. Working memory, often referred to as short-term memory, operates as a dynamic cognitive system that temporarily holds and processes information. It functions as a mental workspace where data is manipulated and utilized for immediate tasks, such as briefly retaining a phone number to dial. In contrast, long-term memory stores information over an extended period, offering a more permanent repository for past experiences and knowledge. Memory is essential for many different everyday activities including but not limited to, learning,

decision-making, problem-solving, communication, survival, identity, and personality. Memory is a complex and dynamic cognitive function that allows us to navigate and interact with the world effectively.

As we encounter new information or situations, our brains record, save, and recall memories connected to those experiences. The processes of repeating information, paying attention, and finding it meaningful can influence memory functionality (Cowan, 2015). Additionally, neurobiological factors, such as brain regions involved in memory, neurotransmitter activity, and synaptic connections, also shape memory functionality. Specific brain regions play crucial roles in memory formation, storage, and retrieval (Kleinknecht, 2024). Gaining insight into these factors helps us to enhance and optimize our memory abilities ultimately leading to the attainment of mature forms of memory.

In regard to memory, two different cultural styles are very influential on how/what we recall. Those two styles are individualism and collectivism which impact the enculturation process of establishing a pattern of recollection. Individualism can be described as an autonomous individual that has been morphed by person-centered talk, an emphasis on emotional cause and effect, and a focus on personal characteristics. On the other hand, collectivism is explained to be more focused on social roles, rules, and third-party impacts and also shines a light on how the sense of self is shaped by situational factors. Both of these share the self-construal factor which is our sense of self in relation to the rest of society. Beyond the different cultural styles, there is still something humans across the world have in common. We could be from significantly different places but still have some commonalities that our memories have allowed us to share. An example of this would be play. Children might not speak the same

language, wear the same clothes, or eat the same food, but they can still play with one another because what we know to be play, is universal (Kleinknecht, 2024).

We come to attain our “mature forms” of memory through a multifaceted process shaped by biological, psychological, and environmental factors. Nelson and Fivush’s social-cultural developmental theory emphasizes how memory construction is influenced by cultural narratives and social contexts, furthering our understanding of the complexities involved in memory development. It suggests that memory development is not solely determined by internal cognitive processes but is also deeply intertwined with external cultural and social influences. Wang and Ross’s (2007) exploration of the impact of culture on memory also emphasizes how cultural values shape mnemonic processes. The authors suggest that individuals from different cultural backgrounds may prioritize different types of information for encoding and retrieval, leading to variations in memory performance and contributing to the attainment of mature memory forms. Memory is shaped by what we experience and learn.

The relationship between memory and creativity is complex. Memory processes can both influence and be influenced by creativity. In terms of memory retrieval, creativity often involves making connections between existing ideas or retrieving information from our memory to generate new concepts. Creative thinking involves linking unrelated ideas. Memory plays a role in associative thinking, where diverse information is connected to form new innovative ideas (Benedek & Fink, 2019). It allows us to draw on our past experiences that are stored in our memory. This ability to learn from these experiences can help to fuel creative processes even further by providing a foundation for new ideas. Additionally, memory contributes to imagination and visualization, enabling individuals to mentally manipulate and explore different scenarios. It is important to remember that the relationship between memory and creativity is not

one-sided. While memory supports creativity, the creative process can also influence memory. Engaging in creative acts can help to enhance memory and make information more memorable (Kleinknecht, 2024).

As we conclude our exploration into the fascinating realm of memory and its profound influence on identity, the mission of IdentityCraft becomes even clearer. Our project aims to bridge the gap between understanding memory processes and harnessing them for personal growth and empowerment. By acknowledging the challenges and misconceptions that surround memory, we pave the way for a solution that can be transformative. Through a combination of insightful content, engaging activities, and practical strategies, IdentityCraft offers individuals the opportunity to redefine their relationship with memory. Our project sees a future where individuals no longer feel indebted to their memory limitations but instead wield it as a powerful tool for self-discovery and authenticity. Together, we can embark on this journey of memory exploration, forging a path toward a more intentional sense of identity.

References

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