

Is memory a
constructive and
active process?



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- Joane Cree

Memory is a constructive and active process' Evaluate this claim, drawing upon evidence from Chapter 8. of Book 1, *Mapping Psychology*

Memories are part of people that grow and develop overtime, through everyday life and the experience that they have. They are vital in that they tell people how to react to certain situations and the people that they encounter along the way. Memories can allow people to effectively cope with social situations, and choose the best behaviour to suit the situation. They allow people to remember rules or safety information, to keep themselves and other safe. A lot of the feelings about a situation that people have come from previous knowledge of how they felt or what happened to them at that time. They can make experiences more stressful, but they can also build up confidence or make them feel more nervous. Memories provide people with information to allow them to make decisions, they allow them to plan their lives and help them to understand their own personalities as well as others. Therefore they are apart of the people they are and the people that they will become. This essay will look at memory as being a dynamic and active process rather than just a mechanism for storing information.

A cognitive perspective on memory is not easy to investigate, as it cannot be observed directly. A variety of methods are used to provide evidence and explanations into understanding structures and theories of the mind. These include controlled laboratory experiments, quasi-experiments, field experiments, diary studies and cross-sectional studies, using insider as well as outsider viewpoints. Useful comparative information can be found by looking at case studies of memory deficits. Memory researchers have <https://assignbuster.com/is-memory-a-constructive-and-active-process/>

developed various theories to help to understand what regions of the brain are involved in making memories, and memory operating processes, how memories are constructed and how these are not always remembered exactly in the memory as they happened. They provide an illustration on how we are constituted by experiences and how this affects behaviour. You need a reference to Pheonix here (Pheonix 2007)

Researchers have found three key memory processes, which work together to process information. These include encoding processes, storage processes and lastly retrieval processes. All three of these processes work with each other, but how well the information is remembered depends on how well it was encoded. Encoding information involves putting information into the memory to store it. Using a visual appearance, a sound of a word or the meaning of the word, or a skill action, which is then transferred into a code. Once an experience is coded, storage processes retain the coded information in the memory, and it is then used to form internal representations, when it is matched with something seen. (Using the retrieval process the information is) Retrieval involves taking (en) from the memory store. It is then recognised and recalled by the memory. Research completed by William James (1890), looked at a primary memory permitting conscious activity in the mind and also a secondary memory which was responsible for storing the knowledge. Further research provided three sub-sections, sensory memory, short - term and long-term memory Need another reference to Brace and Roth here.

Memory is active, can be selective and constructive [p2], but the memory does depend on the brain functioning, and memory research has shown that <https://assignbuster.com/is-memory-a-constructive-and-active-process/>

experiences and ongoing cognitive functions can affect the brain biologically. Experiences in the environment can also contribute to our biological being. Leading researcher Albert Bartlett believed in constructive memory, and he rejected the idea that memory involves us replaying people's experiences of the past. This again suggests that memories grow throughout people's lives. Bartlett completed a study involving a story 'The war of the ghosts', from this study Bartlett found when they were asked to recall this story, that the story they told was different to the original one. He believed the errors to the story were the result of going beyond what was explicitly stated in the story. Bartlett later suggested from his research that when we are given new materials, we use previous knowledge/ past experience to make sense of it, 'effort after meaning'. His work demonstrated how the information stored in the memory and its accuracy could be affected by people's own knowledge and experience of their life. His ideas have led to further research taken place into the memory being a constructive rather than a reproductive process. That the memory is more active and has different components, not just a store for information.

Future memories will not be exactly the same as past ones, the memory of an event can change over time when given new information, so it needs to be flexible. Memories of past events can be reconstructed so may not be accurate in how it is remembered or recalled. This is a constructive rather than a reproductive system.

Another argument by researchers is that experiences become memories and memories become structure, they are however inter-linked. Both of these making a person who they are, both biology and experiences influence

memory. As neither biology or experience provides us with the full story. Research into memory has shown that the experiences that people have and people's ongoing cognitive functions can be seen to affect the brain biologically. Studies into memory processes and structures provide evidence of how we are constituted by experiences around us. However having knowledge of an experience provide us with stimulation in order to cue a memory.

It is believed that memory can be enhanced, and people can actively help their memory retain information. The theory by Craik and Lockhart (1972 cited in Brace and Roth 2007) in the levels of processing theory suggest that the retention of material is dependent on how deeply it was processed when encoded. They suggested that just copying down words without any meaning, would mean that the words would only be encoded at that level. Words with a meaning is encoded at a ' deeper level' so will therefore be more likely to be retained. This is because the brain is processing information more intensively, actively linking meaning to other stored material. Craik and Lockhart also looked at how the brain can memorise information by repeating information, with out further meaning behind it. These are all active processes. An example can be seen in an experiment by both Craik and Lockhart, based on this theory, the theory of processing investigation found that the participants remembered more when told to remember the set of items. It was discovered by researchers that memory recall can be improved by using cues or prompts to retrieve information, so would suggest the memory is an active process which can be improved, therefore illustrating flexibility of the mind. It is the dynamic side of the

memory that allows us to develop techniques to aid in remembering information.

However a memory can also make errors, and often the memory can fail. But imperfections tell us that memory is not just a reproduction of past experiences, and that it is a constructive process. Pieces of information from different sources come together to create the memory. Brace N at al, ' Mapping Psychology' P 170' memory is an active, selective and constructive (rather than passive) process that is influenced by our previous knowledge, our emotional state and the social dynamics of the current situation'. The memory does not always work correctly, though sometimes this can be just temporary. Research into memory deficits tells us that parts of a damaged brain can be compensated for by other parts of the brain allowing for new memories and learning, again an active process. Another example of this is when memories are damaged or failing, as the memory can compensate to allow for this. By studying atypical memories it allows researchers to understand how the memory works and what part of the brain works with what memory processes.

Memory is different among different people with different factors influencing its efficiency, such as knowledge and experiences (. Memories) and are personal to people with new memories being created all the time, as in life people continue to learn to adapt to the world around them. It could be said that memory is laid down biologically but is the outcome of the experiences people have. Memories can be changed and are not a total record of an experience (, as memories) not only because they can often fade (Memories) but because they can (also) be changed or elaborated (<https://assignbuster.com/is-memory-a-constructive-and-active-process/>

when they are recalled) , suggesting that they are not fixed and have a degree of plasticity/flexibility as they can change and develop. We can also actively employ techniques to help us remember information. Therefore this would mean that the memory is active rather than it being simply a store for information.

Word Count - 1, 431

Reference:

Brace, N and Roth I (2007) ' Memory: structures, processes and skills'. In Miell, D Pheonix,

A and Thomas K. *Mapping Psychology* . Milton Keynes. The Open University

Good end of essay referencing.

[p1]Whilst it is good that you have made it clear how important memory this good be very much summarised. The terms that most need defining are “constructive” and “ active”. You need to tell the reader how you mean to tackle the question i. e. what evidence you will use.

[p2]Some explanation, and perhaps an example of what is meant by constructive is needed here.

[p3]This conclusion is reasonably well focused on assessing the claim, and summarises your points fairly well in relation to individual differences, interaction between biology and experience, plasticity and employing techniques.

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