

Making Observations of Psychological Processes in Everyday Life [Student Handout]**[04] Memory****A. Introduction**

There's virtually nothing we do or experience that is not affected by memory, but like other mental processes not only do we use memory without realizing it, when we do so we have the feeling that it's solid and trustworthy—as neat, reliable and above all immutable as a book, a photograph or a computer.

Key Concepts

- Kinds of memory (implicit/explicit; biographical/procedural)
- Forgetting (amnesia)
- Memory Distortion(s)
- 'Seven Sins' (fallacies)
- Memory manufacture
- Memory manipulation

Many lines of converging research force us to affirm that nothing could be farther from the truth. Most things that enter our minds are almost immediately forgotten. Memories can be altered in the easiest of ways and then they settle in as the new baseline for what we recall, after which they parade about as if they're obviously and incontrovertibly true, all without our ever noticing.

B. Questions to Guide Your (Re)Search

[1] When do people use their stock of memories to decide what to do, even though they don't realize they're using memories to guide their actions? How does recognizing that people's actions are based on the memories they have accumulated affect our understanding of what they do?

[2] How often do people make errors based on their conviction that their memories are more solid and dependable than they really are? What sorts of situations or experiences tend to lead to such errors?

[3] How do we become aware of the fact that our memories have led us astray? How often do people become aware of the fact that their distorted or defective memory has led them astray? What sorts of things help people recognize their errors?

[4] Psychologists have shown that there are different kinds of memory, and that it's possible to not remember something with one kind of memory (say, our biographical or explicit memory system) that we do remember with another kind of memory (say, our procedural or implicit memory system). What do such differences imply about how we conduct ourselves? How do people become aware of discrepancies between what different memory systems know? Are there particular situations that are more likely to alert people to such discrepancies?

[5] Work by Loftus and others has shown that it's remarkably easy to alter memories—up to and including inserting false memories into our minds—and that when such things happen the altered memories become the new baseline for what we recall. How often does that happen in real life? How often do people become aware when it has? What percentage of a person's memories are actually false ones? How would a person become aware of having a false memory? Are there particular situations or experiences that are more likely to cause false memories or distort existent ones?

[05] Intelligence

A. Introduction

While the craze for IQ testing has definitely diminished we humans remain obsessed with intelligence. Some research suggests that in many situations we make decisions about our relationships based on assessments of intelligence than on beauty, physical well being or even financial status, and we certainly do so in many other situations.

Key Concepts

- Intelligence vs Rationality
- IQ (measurement, evaluation)
- Mental retardation
- Eugenics

The Fundamental Attribution Error often kicks in as we watch other people, leading us to conclude that the doubtful behaviors we see others do are caused by their stupidity—even though, of course, when we think about why we might have done such things ourselves (which most of us have) that's almost never our first thought about ourselves.

The tendency to make such judgments about other people's intelligence so spontaneously and so regularly is striking in its own right, but think, too, about how often we think about our own intelligence as we make choices for ourselves, sometimes berating ourselves for our stupidity; sometimes patting ourselves on the back for our cleverness—even if we typically keep such thoughts to ourselves.

B. Questions to Guide Your (Re)Search

[1] How often do people make attributions about the intelligence of others (or themselves)? What are the circumstances and situations that bring forth such judgments?

[2] Type 1 thinking is very powerful and makes us very smart, but precisely because it does it can give us a false sense of security that can lead us seriously astray. How often do people who are perfectly intelligent make mistakes *because* they are intelligent? What sorts of situations are particularly prone to causing such errors in our thinking?

[3] Because they use different systems of thought it is quite possible to be intelligent* (which uses Type 1 thinking) and still act irrationally* (which uses Type 2 thinking). How many examples can you find where an otherwise intelligent person has acted irrationally?

[4] Are there particular experiences or situations that make irrational thinking and/or behavior more likely?

[5] What sorts of situations get us thinking about our own intelligence as we make decisions and take choices for ourselves?

* Intelligence seems to be about how much we can process in a given amount of time; rationality has to do with how well we take in and process information to come to reasonable conclusions and take effective actions.