

Searching For Memory: The Brain, The Mind, And The Past

By Daniel L. Schacter

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Memory. There may be nothing more important to human beings than our ability to enshrine experience and recall it. While philosophers and poets have elevated memory to an almost mystical level, psychologists have struggled to demystify it. Now, according to Daniel Schacter, one of the most distinguished memory researchers, the mysteries of memory are finally yielding to dramatic, even revolutionary, scientific breakthroughs. Schacter explains how and why it may change our understanding of everything from false memory to Alzheimer's disease, from recovered memory to amnesia with fascinating firsthand accounts of patients with striking—and sometimes bizarre—amnesias resulting from brain injury or psychological trauma.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
Daniel Schacter, a Harvard professor of psychology and researcher into the workings of memory and the brain, authoritatively summarizes the most up-to-date scientific knowledge in this controversial field. Many of the advances have come from the study of brain-damaged patients: some remember past events clearly, yet forget the basics of everyday knowledge; others have precisely the reverse affliction. Putting this work together with brain scans and experiments on normal people, a useful understanding has emerged of the connections between the brain and the mind, and of the different types of memory. Schacter also bravely refutes the notion of "recovered memory," arguing persuasively that false memories can be easily created.

From Publishers Weekly
Schacter, a Harvard psychology professor, has produced a full, rich picture of how human memory works, an elegant, captivating tour de force that interweaves the latest research in cognitive psychology and neuroscience with case materials and examples from everyday life. Clinical studies of brain-damaged and amnesiac patients reinforce his thesis that memory is not a single faculty, as was long assumed, but instead depends on a variety of systems, each tied to a particular network of brain structures, all acting in concert so we recognize objects, acquire habits, hold information for brief periods, retain concepts and recollect specific events. Aided by numerous reproductions of contemporary paintings that evoke the subjective workings of memory, Schacter explores how we convert fragmentary remains of experience into autobiographical narratives. Implicit memory, at work even when we are unable to fully recall recent events, pervasively, unconsciously colors our perceptions, judgments, feelings and behavior, he maintains. Chapters also cover distortion in memory, repressed memory of childhood sexual abuse, recollection of extreme trauma and memory impairment with aging. This wonderfully enlightening survey enlarges our understanding of the mind's potential.
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From Library Journal
Harvard psychologist Schacter (Victims of Memory, LJ 4/15/95) here delivers a solid, thoughtful analysis of memory, underscoring the relationship between memory's limitations and its pervasive influence as the core of how the past shapes the present. Memory, he writes, is not to be conceptualized as a unitary phenomenon but as a composite of separate processes and systems. Memories do not emerge as passive recordings of reality but also store meaning and emotion. Consequently, the way we perceive events plays a major role in what we later recall. Schacter argues effectively that it is important to know how past memories shape present realities. Echoing Barry Gordon's Memory: Remembering and Forgetting (Mastermedia, 1995), this analysis of a burgeoning new area of study is recommended for informed readers.?Dennis Glenn Twiggs, Winston-Salem, N.C.
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