

Book Reviews

Alan J. Parkin, 1993
Memory: Phenomena, Experiment and Theory
Oxford, UK: Blackwell
224 pages, 0-631-15712-3

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Parkin has written a text on memory intended for advanced undergraduate and graduate psychology students. The general focus of the book is on the organisation of memory, with chapters devoted to the issues surrounding structure versus process accounts of memory, permanent store, remembering and forgetting, imagery, working memory, the development of memory, and finally ageing.

Parkin offers the reader a refreshing treatment of a topic dealt with innumerable times in a variety of text books on cognition. Several features set this book apart from many others covering memory. First, the book moves beyond the usual treatment of memory and provides good coverage of topics not often dealt with in standard texts. For example, there is substantial coverage of the implicit/explicit distinction, as well as chapters on development of memory, and the consequences of ageing for remembering. When more traditional issues in memory are covered, they are considered within contemporary theoretical frameworks.

One notable strength of the book is the adoption of an approach that seeks to provide insight into memory functions through a combined consideration of human experimental, neuro-

psychological, and neuropharmacological data. Such an approach is most welcome and the integration is done in such a way as to be informative without being overwhelming.

A third feature of the book is the successful attempt to link topics. In each chapter, there is a good degree of integration of new material with experiments and concepts described earlier in the book. For example, in discussing the processes underlying familiarity-based recognition in the chapter on remembering and forgetting, Parkin reminds the reader of the processes responsible for implicit memory discussed in an earlier chapter, and draws attention to the similarity between the two. As another example, the data and theory presented in the chapters on development and ageing are clearly discussed from the perspectives developed in earlier chapters. In addition to referencing back, foreshadowing of ideas is also used effectively throughout in an effort to maintain an integrated discussion of the various topics. In general, this style is useful in encouraging student readers to resist the temptation to consider each presented topic as a separate package to be studied in isolation.

The writing style is one many of us should emulate. Accounts are concise, informative, and interesting, making the material very accessible. At the same time, Parkin has generally avoided the textbook trap of offering cut-and-dried pronouncements of truth; for the most part, information is presented in the context of a continuing debate. With some previous grounding in cognition, the average student should find the book very readable as well as thought provoking, and come away with a sense of the challenge and excitement that is inherent in the study of human memory.