BACKGROUND

What kids of details get included in memories about our own lives? How do the quality and contents of these memories change as time passes?

This in-class assignment is based on methods from the following study:

Gardner, R. S., Vogel, A. T., Mainetti, M., & Ascoli, G. A. (2012). Quantitative Measurements of Autobiographical Memory Content. *PLOS ONE*, *7*(9), e44809. https:%%//%%doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0044809

PART 1

Please make a copy of this Google spreadsheet by clicking this link:

Make copy of text prompt spreadsheet

Instructions for part 1

In this part you will be prompted with a set of words on a spreadsheet. You will be asked to recall 16 different memories. After you recall a memory, change the value of the "**CHANGE ME TO REFRESH**" cell using the drop-down menu, which will refresh the spreadsheet and give you a new list of words for a prompt (the sheet often takes a few seconds to refresh).

Your task is to recall the first autobiographical memory that the words bring to your mind. This means just the first memory that you think of, not the earliest memory. The episode may have occurred any time from birth to now. Your memory does not need to be associated in any way to the given set of words. It is also ok if the memory comes to your mind before you have finished reading all of the words in the set. This memory should be of a brief, self-consistent episode of your life. An episode can be as short as a single snapshot and up to a few seconds long.

If the memory you think of refers to a typical and repeated episode that happened regularly or multiple times in your life, you can use it only if you can fixate on a specific individual event. If you can only recall the generic (repeated) event, look for another memory.

If after a few seconds you cannot retrieve any autobiographical memory after reading the set of words, refresh the spreadsheet to produce a different set of words.

After you identify a memory, use a piece of paper to write down a phrase or brief note to help you identify it. The purpose of these notes is just for you to recall this same memory during part 2.

Your memories are private. You don't need to turn in the paper on which you make the notes. The information you will submit doesn't ask you to describe the memories, but only to rate them. If you recall a memory that makes you feel uncomfortable, you don't have to include it on your list. If you think this activity in general will make you uncomfortable, you can get credit without participating – see the NOTES section below.

PART 2

To do part 2, please make a copy of the ratings spreadsheet by clicking this link:

Make copy of ratings spreadsheet

Instructions for part 2

Make ratings for each memory on the spreadsheet.

For the first item ("**AgeRangeLowEnd**") use the drop-down menu to indicate the*low end* of the 2-year period during which you think the memory event happened. For example, if you think the memory is about something that happened when you were 7, put 6. Just make your best guess.

For the second and third items, rate the **valence** (Misery-Pleasure) and **arousal** (how much emotion you feel) *while recalling the memory*. That is, these ratings describe your experience right now, and not the feelings you were experiencing at the time of the memories themselves.

For the last 8 items, indicate how many of each type of element is present in your memory:

People*:* How many uniquely identifiable persons (excluding yourself) do you remember in the episode? Example: You were at some party. Your best friend John was there, and so was his second wife, whose name you dont recall. The host, Marc, was there, and some of his relatives, but you cannot remember which. *Count 3 elements* (John, his wife, and Marc).

Feelings*:* How many distinct subjective feelings (tastes, odors, temperature, emotions, etc.) do you recall in the episode? Example: It was the last day of school. You had a stomachache, the room smelled like fish and it was too warm. Still, you felt very happy. *Count 4 elements.*

Episodes*:* How many other episodes that immediately precede or follow this one can you recall? Example: John remembers the first home run he hit. He remembers the instance the ball hit his bat and a thunderous crack rang out. Recalling the episodes that led up to and following this moment, John recalls taking a warm-up swing before entering the batters box. He also recalls focusing on the pitch right before the ball was thrown. After he hit the ball he recalls running around the bases after which his memory fades but he recalls later that his team went out for a celebratory pizza. Though going out for pizza is a memory, it is not counted because it is not sequential - there is a gap in time. *Count 3 elements.*

Places*:* How many spatial features do you remember of this episode: town, house or road, room or vehicle, your exact position, etc. Example: You recall chatting with a friend in her apartment in New York, but not whether in the living room or bedroom, nor whether sitting or standing. *Count 2 elements* (for the apartment and the town, even if knowing the apartment automatically specifies the town).

Things*:* How many uniquely identifiable objects do you remember (must have at least one detail such as texture, material, size, color, or else be out of context)? Example: If you were inside a bedroom, the window doesnt count as an object (since almost all bedrooms have one), unless you remember that it was open, or that it had pink curtains Same with a bed, a closet, etc. If, on the other hand, you remember there were skates on the floor, an apple on the table, or something not usually found in the standard bedroom, then *you should count those objects*.

Times: How many temporal features do you remember of this episode: the exact year, month or season, day of the week, time of the day, etc. Example: You remember getting a speeding ticket while driving to church. You cant remember the exact year, nor time of the day, but you recall it was summer and

Sunday. *Count 2 elements.*

***Contexts**:* How many other explicit contextual details (weather, situations, events, etc.) do you remember? Example: You remember that on that same day, the Lakers won the league, your grandma was at the hospital, and it was freezing cold outside... *Count 3 elements*.

***Details**:* How many other particular details do you recall (words uttered or heard, facial expressions, actions, clothing...)? Example: It was your first date. When you arrived, she said: late at your first date!?, and you smiled. She had already ordered a drink. *Count 3 elements.*

TO COMPLETE THE ASSIGNMENT

Save a copy of the **ratings spreadsheet** to your computer. You**don't**need to upload the text prompt sheet.

Under the “File” menu, go to “Download” and select “Comma-separated values (.csv, current sheet)”

This file will usually be saved to your computer's Downloads folder.

Upload the file to this Canvas assignment page.

All done!

NOTES

- You can always choose not to participate in this activity. In that case, please open and download an empty copy of the ratings spreadsheet, and upload it as is. You will get credit for the assignment.
- The instructor will analyze the responses and create a summary for the class. All data analyzed by the instructor is anonymous, you will never be identified.

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