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Untitled

Fabric, film photography

The psychology behind repetition and recognition specifically stood out to me as a focal point in my research. I was curious about my topic before I began this project but had never really dove into research to answer my questions until now. After discovering what I could find about the psychology behind recognition, I knew I wanted to choose a way to combine that with my 3 other focal points; The psychology of Repetition, Comfort, and Nostalgia. When thinking of a potentially nostalgic item, often the thought of a quilt is brought up. Quilts are often passed along through family members or created from nostalgic textiles which creates a sentimental value and nostalgic connection to that one specific item. For the execution of my project, I chose to create a quilt using thrifted textiles that have been previously loved and create my own pattern within the quilt. I wanted to create the quilt with disassembled aspects and use another medium in order to create more to look at without overwhelming the piece. I hope for this piece to evoke a nostalgic and comforting feeling when viewed.

Psychology of Specific Emotions and Actions



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Author's Note: This paper addresses the psychology and meaning behind certain emotions and mental reactions that humans are wired to experience. I will include information about the history and psychological effects. It will discuss the psychology of Comfort, Nostalgia, and Repetition and how these impact us mentally and physically. In this piece, I will also dig into some of the psychology of why we feel these reactions and emotions.

I~ Intro:

I have wondered for a while now about what is behind emotions and the brain's reactions psychologically. Recently, I have felt an urge to dig into these curiosities that I'm sure not just I have felt. There are certain emotions and brain reactions that have especially interested me surrounding Repetition. These are simple reactions that are felt in our minds that impact us physically and mentally. Repetition and patterns have always been helpful for studying and able my brain to use less mental energy to be able to answer what I need to in situations such as test taking. I have always seemed to find a pattern in anything. Whether it is a phone number, my debit card number, an address, a paragraph, or an image, I will always find some pattern in it. Finding a pattern for me is quick if I look at it more than once, I will use a method in my head that gives me that ability to recall it later due to repetition. While patterns are not what I am focusing on for my research, I feel that it ties into repetition and can be put in the same category. They both help with memorization and entertain your brain, and they both require similar amounts of focus. There is more than just one idea in Repetition. Repetition is a comforting reaction in many ways which is why I decided to include the psychology of comfort in my research as well. Everyone experiences comfort in different ways but one way that they all connect is that everyone finds what makes them comfortable and repeats. When someone finds something that creates a good comforting feeling,

they repeat it. Comfort turns into a habit, what makes you comfortable might even be done without being aware of it and done mindlessly. Nostalgia is usually a mindless reaction triggered by a certain action, smell, place, sound, image, item, or person. My research focuses on often mindless reactions, emotions, and some of the psychology behind them. So my question is, What is going through our minds when we experience one or more of these focused reactions or emotions? And why do we feel the way we do when we experience one or more of these reactions or emotions?

II~ My personal relationship with Repetition

I generally find comfort in patterns because of how it assists me to complete tasks with ease to where I could feel comfortable the whole time. I remember being somewhere around the age of 8 or 9 when I really started to realize the importance and joy of patterns. It started when I realized I could memorize addresses really well with the numbers and how I would use basic math to create a pattern and be able to memorize that address for ages after creating that pattern. It would always bring a smile to my face when I would be able to memorize something so well, when I was 11, I got my first debit card and just a week later, I could recite the whole 16 digits as well as the expiration date and CVV of course. I would be able to lie in bed if I was online shopping and not even have to reach for my card. The comfort in repetition visually and mentally for me has always been there and hopefully will stay for a while.

On the other hand, repetition can also mean compulsive repetition, this can oftentimes refer to OCD. I myself have OCD and while it has gotten much better for me and I have found ways to help myself with it, I still find myself filled with urges to repeat certain actions. There have always been certain triggers in my OCD but I have gotten rid of a fair amount, which I am overjoyed about, but of course, there are going to be a few that will linger for probably a while longer. A lot

of my OCD personally is very textural and symmetry-based. If I step on a sidewalk crack with one foot, I feel the difference in the feeling of the ground and feel the need to repeat with the other foot to even it out. If I grab a handle with one hand, I must grab it with the other as well and repeat it over and over until they feel even and the same again. The list goes on but I am sure you can understand the pattern by now, I constantly feel the need for comfort and serenity psychologically but unfortunately, very few people will be able to have that forever.

III~ Psychological history of emotions

In the 1850s, theories of habit and repetition relied on the conservation of energy to explain the tendency of the mind to reinforce mental patterns. These patterns were often referred to as “chains.” Chains traced the flow of thought as structural mechanisms for all learning. Theories of habit conceptualized the mind as a closed system, driven to repetitive, automatic behaviors in order for the brain to conserve energy for more difficult and energy-consuming tasks. Many people were fearing getting trapped in compulsions due to mindless repetition. The knowing of these mindless habits and repetitions evoked concerns about the status of individuals in an increasingly modernizing society in the 19th century. There is a deep and long history of the psychology of emotions and it would take what would feel like forever to be able to fully debrief.

IV~ Repetition

Repetition is everywhere. Footsteps, studying for a test, closing the door, it’s all repetition and we all see and experience it constantly. Repetition is a helpful mental reaction that most people tend to use on a day-to-day basis whether they realize it or not. There is a term, Repetition Priming, that refers to the change in responding to a word or an object as a result of a previous encounter with

that same item, either in the same task or in a different task (Schweinberger, 2002). Our brain uses this technique without us even being aware of it most of the time and will most of the time bring it back up later on when it should be useful.

There have been several studies done about how repetition imprints faces and names into our brains leading us to quickly recall who someone is (Schweinberger, 2002). Name recognition was found to process quicker due to auditory and visual repetition, this isn't that surprising but I still find it interesting that we can link these recognitions to something specific and how it can evolve with repetition. On the other side, for facial recognition, there were studies done where there would be 90 celebrity facial images given to each participant and they would have to identify the person. Human faces are intricate and rich with detail, they include a lot of information and are the main factor in identification. Then they would show images of people who they had only seen and known their name once, obviously, the celebrity would be quickly identified due to the repetition and quick thoughtless recognition of that celebrity. The person who they had only seen once, would take them effort and time to recognize, if they could even end up recognizing them in the end.

There is also Compulsive Repetition which often relates to OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) which is a diagnosable disorder that people can develop at a young age that causes urges to compulsively repeat certain actions. As well, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) which is a disorder caused by a traumatic event that could cause flashbacks, compulsions, aggression, and lastly, Childhood Trauma can cause compulsions as well. Repetition compulsion refers to an unconscious need to reenact early past traumas. People who experience the compulsions repeat these traumas in new situations that may symbolize the initial trauma. Humans are creatures of habit so it is a natural instinct to create repetition in our lives, but sometimes it can be taken further

than just ordinary day-to-day. These compulsions can absorb your life and cause mental chaos as well as physical chaos. Humans are wired to feel emotions and create reactions but because of possible trauma, those emotions might become poorly regulated and cause one to lash out and respond in a hostile way. While it can absorb your life, some minimal compulsions are alright and can help your day-to-day.

V~ Nostalgia

Nostalgia can be felt when a memory of something comes up by visual, scent, touch, sound, or place. Many people believe that nostalgia is purely entertainment and when you are “feeling nostalgic” it is forced just to feel a carefree rush into the past. This raises a question for me and makes me wonder what it even means to “feel nostalgic”. While many don’t just force the feeling, it is more of a way that the brain can raise emotions for one. Many people’s brains use nostalgia as a way to bring up pleasant memories in a time of need. It often arises longing and deep feelings of emotions and might not always raise someone’s mood. It comes up through physical and mental triggers. For example, certain songs that I hear bring back memories and cause me to sit blankly and just remember those emotions of the time it took me back. Same with scents and visuals. Nostalgia is often attributed to feelings of reverting back to the best version of your own past, (Kincaid, 2022). Psychologist Clay Rutledge says that in order for something to classify as nostalgia, it must include a social component and personal meaning thought must be accessed. It must also be rooted from the past, likely a childhood memory. There is an unavoidable chemical reaction in a person's brain when experiencing nostalgia. The reaction causes a feeling of happiness that quickly fades into sadness and longing. Nostalgia is mostly joy but it does come with its slight pinch of sadness or loss. Joy releases dopamine and serotonin, nostalgia does as well and creates

a similar chemical reaction to joy (Kincaid, 2022). Nostalgia is so powerful that in the 17th century, it was considered a psychological disorder and thought to be possessed by a demon if you experienced nostalgia. Nostalgia goes back for centuries all the way into the Ancient Greek era. In 2016, there was a study done by Routledge to show Nostalgia present in MRI brain scans (Kincaid 2022). It showed 2 areas of the brain that were activated, the memory and the reward system. They found that Nostalgia was helpful with homesick veterans and the nostalgia would filter out anything bad and just remind the veteran of a joyous memory with no upsetting parts. For this part of the study, they used sight and sound, but specifically smell in order to trigger the reaction. It was found to help treat veterans depression as well because of the filtering abilities of Nostalgia. Naturally, humans crave this feeling because it gives us the pinpointed comfort and happiness that we know we once had.

VI~ Comfort

We all know comfort. Whether it is buying a new pack of socks and retaining that glorious new sock feeling for a few days until you run out of crisp new socks or finishing all of your homework for the next week, we have all felt comfort in some way. It seems that there isn't a lot to it and it is just a pleasant feeling.

My main focus is the psychological side of it but that includes how your brain feels when you are physically comfortable. Psychological comfort can be reached by recreating experiences that remind you of fond memories (Miller, 2009). Physical comfort is more universal in the way that everyone has their own version of comfort. It could be a certain seating position, clothing, mattress, scent, etcetera. Whatever it is, It should cause you to feel comfortable physically and somewhat mentally depending on your level of relaxation and comfort. There is also information

I found about how physical comfort relates to body image. Wearing clothing that is physically uncomfortable such as tighter clothing can cause mental discomfort and trigger body shame. It might be as simple as sitting in a comfortable chair or laying down as soon as someone starts feeling shame about their image. We have all been raised with the idea of comfort but what really does it benefit us with? One thing I found was that there were studies done on how comfort in healthcare affects the patient. When a patient in recovery is experiencing physical comfort there will be benefits. Comfort in recovery processes has been found to speed up recovery processes and unsurprisingly, make a recovery process less agonizing for the patient. Even just having a comfortable soft blanket and pillow will help speed along the process of healing.

VII~ Connections - How they interact with another

One of my main goals in writing this piece was to show how these 3 reactions and emotions interact with each other. Nostalgia is usually thought of as a comfort that one can possess when this feeling comes on but it might not always be a nice comfort. Nostalgia could bring up several types of emotions and while yes you can find comfort in nostalgia, you can also experience fear and past trauma. Earlier, I discussed how repetition compulsions can be caused because of PTSD, well so can nostalgia. Nostalgia is not always good, some nostalgia is triggered due to a PTSD trigger. I chose to focus on repetition but wanted to hook in 2 other brain reactions that have acted importantly to me. These 3 reactions are all frequent mindless actions that humans produce. Yes, you might be thinking about what you are doing or feeling but often times you won't. You could try to be making yourself study or get comfortable and while studying is tiring, these can still be mindless and minimal energy-consuming activities.

VIII~ Conclusion

There are deep evidence-filled answers to these questions I have asked. This piece has barely scratched the surface of how deep you can go. There is so much more information to be heard but so much can turn boring incredibly quickly. So much could be included but there is a limit for everything and there is only so much that should and can be said all at once. So, what is going through our minds when we experience one or more of these focused reactions or emotions? And why do we feel the way we do when we experience one or more of these reactions or emotions?

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