

## IN MEMORIAM

### Martin A. Conway (1952–2022)

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Martin Conway: "... memories are not some sort of mental wallpaper that merely provide a backdrop for the self. They are alive, free, sometimes alien, occasionally dangerous mental representations, that can overwhelm as easily as they fulfill." (Conway, 2006, p. 548)

Martin Anthony Conway, one of the founders of the scientific study of memory, died in the Northeast of England on March 30, 2022. He is remembered for his contribution to autobiographical memory, which he brought to the mainstream of cognitive psychology, but also to neuroscience, clinical psychology, the arts, and the judiciary.

Conway was one of six children, born in Darlington, England, in 1952. After finishing school without qualifications, he held various jobs before moving to London. There, in his 20s, he studied in evening classes before graduating with a BSc in Psychology from University College London in 1980. He defended his PhD in 1984 at the Open University on "Content and Organisational Differences Between Autobiographical and Semantic Memories."

Inspired by Eleanor Rosch's semantic network, Conway's early empirical work was among the first to probe autobiographical retrieval with reaction times (Conway & Bekerian, 1987), exposing a hierarchical structure that inspired his later models. He was an extremely well-read scholar, citing 19th century neurologists such as Ribot, and psychoanalysts such as Freud and Breuer in his authoritative textbook. His book (Conway, 1990), along with David Rubin's text, helped to establish the field of autobiographical memory.

At heart, Conway was an experimental psychologist, motivated to design experiments that in their ingenuity revealed the processes involved in retrieval. He believed that "... it is not possible to introspect non-conscious processes, not only by definition but in reality too! If this were not the case we would hardly need to do any psychology at all" (Conway, 2017, p. 7). However, Conway's major contributions were theoretical, in particular in "The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System" (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000) and "Memory and the Self" (Conway, 2005). These works set out the dynamic processes by which specific memories of the past are shaped and reconstructed.

In no small way, Conway focused on answering Norman and Brobow's conundrum (1979, p. 109): "How does one know what is needed from memory? Is not the knowledge of what is sought in itself part of the knowledge that is being sought?" Conway's answer hinged on the self, proposing that a control process created a "retrieval model" guided by a "working self," which accessed information pertinent to current goals. The working *self*, so-called in a characteristic witty nod to friend and mentor Alan Baddeley's working *memory*, exists to "... maintain coherence ... and it does so, in part, by modulating the construction of specific memories, determining their accessibility and inaccessibility, and in the encoding and consolidation of memories" (Conway, 2005, p. 597).

Highlighting the role of the self enabled applications to social, personality, and clinical psychology. Conway illustrated how autobiographical memories both drew on—and informed—abstract knowledge structures in a "conceptual self," including long-term goals, schemas, possible selves, values, and beliefs (Conway et al., 2004). He asserted that integration of episodic memory with stored autobiographical knowledge and the conceptual self yields our most vivid and affectively resonant memories—memories that play a central role in self-definition and self-understanding. He provided case examples of how trauma disrupts this integrative process, resulting in posttraumatic stress disorder and persisting memory dysfunction.

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In making these connections, Conway fashioned a bridge from cognitive science to the emerging field of narrative identity. His emphasis on the crucial relationship between long-term goals and significant autobiographical memories provided the conceptual link to theories of personality, which see individuals' repetitive narrative memories as indicative of major themes in their identity (McAdams & Pals, 2006). Conway's work also informed clinical techniques that employ imagery and "rescripting" to counteract rumination and anxiety secondary to maladaptive and traumatic memories.

Conway also applied principles of autobiographical retrieval to the practice and policies of the judiciary. Starting with influential guidelines published by the British Psychological Society in 2008, Conway produced a series of reports that were provocative but always grounded in theory and evidence. His approach drew on his experiences in court, with a characteristically autobiographical account published as "On Being a Memory Expert Witness: Three Cases" (Conway, 2013). As an expert witness, Conway encountered "remarkable" memories with "highly unusual" levels of detail, which he described as data that memory researchers should seek to understand.

Across his career, Conway's love of culture was clear, whether writing poetry, creating *haute cuisine* or reciting Bob Dylan and Leonard Cohen. His fascination with the arts was woven throughout his work; interdisciplinary collaboration became central to his activity. He contributed to artist Shona Illingworth's *Memory and Forgetting* and *The Watch Man*, an immersive installation about a watchmaker's relationship with his memories of war. He also led a project culminating in a massive projection screen displaying memories of The Beatles for the British Association for the Advancement of Science's Festival in Liverpool in 2008.

Such arts-science collaborations enabled Conway to gain insights into the lived experiences of "Claire," a mother of four and former nurse who lost access to her memories (Loveday & Conway, 2011). Together with Illingworth and Loveday, he spent hours around Claire's kitchen table, looking through photos, drawing pictures, and talking about music. As always with Conway, there was plenty of laughter, but these conversations also explored how it felt not to be able to inhabit the past or create an imagined future; to be stuck in a small "epoch of time." As well as providing the basis for a highly acclaimed exhibition, *Lesions in the Landscape*, these discussions shaped theory about the remembering-imagining window and the role of daydreaming in updating the self (Conway et al., 2016; Conway & Loveday, 2015).

Conway will be remembered for his contributions to the memory community, as cofounder of the journal *Memory* and the

*International Conference of Memory* (both with Susan Gathercole). He mentored and advised many early career researchers internationally, who will remember him for his generosity and familial approach. He is survived by his wife Judith; his children with Susan Gathercole—Jim, Stephen, Jessica, Graham, and Phoebe; and his granddaughters, Lilly, Cassie, and Maeve.

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