

Hippocampal Contributions to Declarative Memory Consolidation During Sleep

James W. Antony and Ken A. Paller

Abstract The human brain faces a fundamental information storage challenge—forming useful new memories while not over-writing important old ones. Memory consolidation, and the corresponding interplay between the hippocampus and neocortex, is a protracted process to adjudicate between these two competing factors. Converging evidence from behavioral, cellular, and systems neuroscience strongly implicates a special role for sleep in stabilizing new declarative memories. In this chapter, we review evidence that during sleep the reactivation of newly acquired neuronal traces has lasting implications for memory transformation and stabilization. We first summarize relevant theoretical issues in memory research and then outline the physiological properties of sleep that may allow for this reactivation. We consider many factors that affect spontaneous memory reactivation, and we highlight research showing that memories can be selectively targeted and modified using learning-related stimuli. Ultimately, the ability to rescue otherwise fleeting episodes from oblivion plays a vital role in human life. Research elucidating this ability will also be critical for understanding how memory breaks down in aging and disease.

During a young scientist's graduate school interviews, a senior researcher told her that she would not cut it in such a competitive field. At each major junction of her life—her first publication, first tenure-track job, a named professorship, and a lifetime achievement award—she remembered the researcher's exact words, his dismissive tone, and the seeds of doubt he planted about her career path as vividly as the day it happened.

Most learning requires repetition. A barrage of visual experience in early life is required for plasticity within the visual system (Wiesel and Hubel 1963). Hundreds to thousands of hours of practice are required to form expert procedural skills. So

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how can an event that occurred just once and took less than 3 s be stored in the connections of the brain for a full lifetime?

The answer appears to lie in the unique physiological properties of the hippocampus and its relationship with the neocortex. A personally important memory, though played out in the world only once, becomes repeatedly replayed after that one unique event by the networks of neurons involved in its formation and storage. A key feature of this ability lies in how much occurs outside of the agent's consciousness. Whereas the young scientist's memory of being told that she would never succeed in science likely returned to her consciousness when revisiting the memory in her mind or recounting the story to a friend, it seems that forming this lasting memory trace required nothing like the number of hours of experience or practice required for a highly refined skill. Thus, while most long-lasting experience-dependent changes in the brain require numerous repetitions to drive requisite changes in synaptic weights, episodic memories must become embedded in the brain and replayed on their own, without extensive efforts to re-live the experience over and over again.

This is not to say offline changes do not play a role in other types of memories. On the contrary, sensory and procedural memories benefit from offline processes, including sleep (Brawn et al. 2010b; Mednick et al. 2003). Additionally, there is evidence that the hippocampus may play a role in types of learning previously deemed to be hippocampal-independent (Albouy et al. 2013).

Nevertheless, something unique must occur that allows for lasting episodic memory traces. The following discussion will focus mostly on changes that occur to a memory trace after its initial formation, with consideration for how various factors operative at encoding might alter this process. We will take a historical perspective on the concept of memory consolidation and then consider the role by which memory reactivation influences consolidation. Although consolidation certainly occurs to some extent during wake, we will focus on the physiological properties present during sleep that create unique conditions for interactions between the hippocampus and neocortex.

Memory Consolidation

Brief Historical Perspective

In this section, we will discuss two major advancements in the concept of memory consolidation, specifically Müller and Pilzecker's (1900) original study that precipitated the creation of the concept and Scoville and Milner's (1957) research with patient H.M. (Fig. 1). We will finish by outlining what researchers theorize about the hippocampus and neocortex in explaining consolidation.

In a series of studies, Müller and Pilzecker (1900) taught participants lists of nonsense syllables and tested them after a delay of typically a few hours (Lechner et al. 1999). Between encoding and testing, they introduced other lists at various

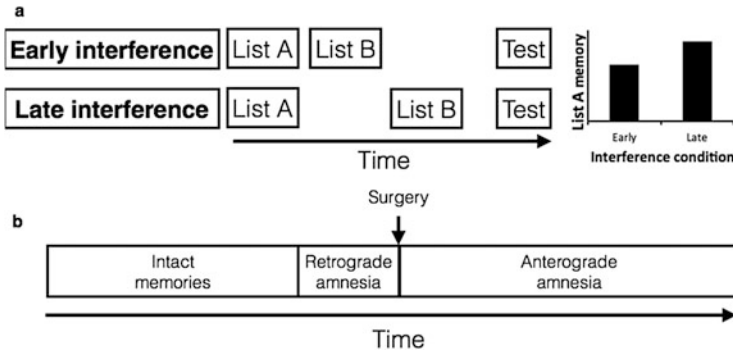


Fig. 1 Historical concepts in memory consolidation. **(a)** After encoding of a list of syllables (List A), introducing interfering information (List B) impairs List A memory when introduced sooner than later (Müller and Pilzecker 1900). A period of time without interference after learning is therefore beneficial for long-term memory stabilization. **(b)** Following medial temporal damage (such as when patient H.M. underwent surgery), the patient not only becomes unable to form new memories going forward (anterograde amnesia), but also cannot recall memories from an earlier time period (retrograde amnesia). Older memories remain largely intact. Therefore, during a prolonged period after learning, some declarative memories become independent of the medial temporal lobe

times within the delay interval and found that the later they gave the new lists, the better participants typically remembered the original information. Thus, they proposed a prolonged process eventually termed “consolidation” by which memories become increasingly resistant to interference. Their seminal finding remains a consistent and fundamental aspect of memory research today.

The next large piece of evidence about memory consolidation came from one of the most famous patients in the history of neuroscience known as H.M. (Scoville and Milner 1957). After H.M. had lived into his 20s with a form of epilepsy that resisted all other forms of treatment, the neurosurgeon William Scoville proposed performing brain surgery to remove the part of H.M.’s brain from which his seizures originated: a large portion of the medial temporal lobe, including the hippocampus. Little was known about this brain structure at the time, but the severity and frequency of his seizures seemed to warrant attempting such an experimental surgery. After removal of the hippocampus on both sides of his brain, the neuropsychologist Brenda Milner found H.M. could perform a whole host of mental functions and he retained many old memories. However, he forgot ones lasting up to a few years before his surgery and, critically, could no longer acquire new memories. He was thereafter, in the words of Suzanne Corkin (2013), trapped in a “permanent present tense.”

H.M.’s impairment, while devastating, radicalized how researchers understood memory. The emerging theoretical picture suggested that when an event is learned, a confluence of information concurrently processed in the brain becomes bound together. This information enters the hippocampus from multiple neocortical streams specialized for processing highly detailed sensory inputs or thoughts as well as the spatial and temporal context in which the information arrives. The

hippocampus then rapidly binds together these distinct components. Initially highly susceptible to interference, new links reach a stable form in the neocortex only after a period of time. The relevant steps may require a certain number of reactivations rather than a certain period of time, *per se*. In either case, consolidation can progress such that networks within the neocortex are sufficient for retrieval—although whether some memories, or the full re-experience of some memories, then depend on only neocortical networks or on both neocortical and hippocampal networks remains a hotly debated issue (see Moscovitch et al. (2005) for one perspective and Squire and Bayley (2007) for another). In either case, converging data across many amnesic patients and animal models has forged agreement among researchers upon this basic conceptualization of consolidation.

Consolidation = Reactivation?

We will begin this section by outlining how memory retrieval acts to reactivate, strengthen, and reorganize a memory trace. We will then argue how this process resembles what occurs spontaneously in the gradual process by which memories become stabilized.

Cognitive psychological models of retrieval have long stressed the role of context on memory retrieval (Godden and Baddeley 1975; Jensen et al. 1971). For instance, psychology students often learn that studying information in the room where the test eventually occurs produces better results. An analogous mental trick is to try to create a mental context that allows for the successful retrieval of a memory. A series of neuroimaging studies have investigated how this phenomenon manifests itself in the brain. Unsurprisingly, neural reactivation patterns at retrieval tend to match those at encoding (Buchsbbaum et al. 2012; Gelbard-Sagiv et al. 2008; Johnson and Rugg 2007; Nyberg et al. 2000; Polyn et al. 2005). Moreover, better matches predict better memory (Johnson et al. 2009; Manning et al. 2012; St-Laurent et al. 2014; Wing et al. 2015). A straightforward explanation of these findings follows from the reinstatement hypothesis (Tulving and Thomson 1973); the better the learning context is reinstated, the more likely a memory will be successfully remembered.

A vast psychological literature shows that memory retrieval does not simply involve finding a memory from storage and placing it back unaffected, as in retrieving a book from a library and later returning it in the same condition. Rather, successful retrieval produces better long-term enhancement than re-exposure to the material itself, a phenomenon known as the testing effect (for a thorough review, see Roediger and Karpicke 2006). During retrieval or during repeated study, stored information can be reactivated, leading in theory to superior storage. A straightforward prediction follows that better neural reactivation of an encoding context would produce better long-term memory at a later test. This prediction has been supported both during repeated study (Newman and Norman 2010; Xue et al. 2010)

and retrieval (Kuhl et al. 2010, 2012a, b; Vilberg and Davachi 2013; though see Karlsson Wirebring et al. 2015).

The above studies show how neural reactivation can counteract forgetting; we will now discuss how this relates to memory consolidation. We mentioned earlier how remote memories eventually become independent of the hippocampus. The gradual changes in activation from the hippocampus to the neocortex in animal data (Lesburguères et al. 2011; Maviel et al. 2004) and human data (Takashima et al. 2009) offer a mechanism by which this transfer occurs. Even stronger support comes from two studies showing that repeated reactivations render memories more quickly resistant to disruption following hippocampal damage (Lehmann and McNamara 2011; Lehmann et al. 2009). In these studies, rodents underwent contextual fear conditioning and then were (or were not) re-exposed to the learning context for 5 days after initial learning. After 5 days, they received sham or hippocampal damage. Without re-exposure, hippocampal damage strongly impaired memory, showing the memory was hippocampal-dependent. However, with repeated exposures, hippocampal damage had no effect on memory. This suggests that memory reactivation, and not time per se, causes memories to become hippocampal-independent. The overarching idea is that newly formed memories initially rely on the hippocampus and neocortex, whereas reorganization through repeated hippocampal-neocortical interaction produces neocortical networks that are sufficient for retrieval (Lesburguères et al. 2011; Redondo and Morris 2011; Squire et al. 2015; Tse et al. 2011).

In these studies reported by Lehmann and colleagues, animals were placed back into the original context, which was inferred to produce memory reactivation. However, behavioral (Craig et al. 2015a; b; Dewar et al. 2012) and neural evidence (Staresina et al. 2013; Tambini et al. 2010) suggests memories also undergo a stabilization process in the absence of overt retrieval. In studies that controlled for overt retrieval, increased resting functional connectivity patterns correlated with the amount of previous learning (Peigneux et al. 2006) and post-learning changes in hippocampal-cortical connectivity correlated with subsequent memory retention (Tambini et al. 2010). To strengthen this idea, it was even found that post-learning changes predicted memory during a non-learning control task (Staresina et al. 2013—but see Dewar et al. 2012, for evidence that rest benefits memories more than does performing non-learning control tasks). Additionally, strongly encoded items become the most preferentially reactivated (Tambini et al. 2010). Finally, it may be especially important that hippocampal processes occur immediately after learning. In humans, breaks between short video clips benefit memory, and allow for the onset of a strong post-clip hippocampal response that predicts memory (Ben-Yakov et al. 2013). Accordingly in rodents, replay occurs during learning (Davidson et al. 2009; Karlsson and Frank 2009) and correlates with memory measures (Dupret et al. 2010; Jadhav et al. 2012). Together, these studies provide a mechanism by which learning produces neural changes that in turn provide for stabilizing newly formed neural traces, presumably by assisting in hippocampal-neocortical transfer. In other words, in considering the findings of Müller and

Pilzecker over 100 years ago, these studies suggest consolidation may occur simply because of reactivation and the processes may be indistinguishable.

We have thus far outlined evidence for how wakeful memory reactivation contributes to stabilization. However, reactivation occurring during sleep plays an important and unique role as well. The following sections will outline the basics of sleep physiology and how it contributes to memory processing.

Characteristics of Sleep Physiology

The emergence of electroencephalographic investigations of sleep in the middle of the twentieth century showed that sleeping was an active process. Throughout the night, the brain progresses through cycles of distinctive stages of brain activity, each cycle lasting approximately 90 min. The physiological features of these stages provide clues about the functions of sleep in homeostasis and memory consolidation.

Typically, wakefulness transitions into stages of light sleep, known as stage-1 and stage-2, followed by the stage of deep sleep known as slow-wave sleep (SWS). To complete a full cycle, there will be a subsequent return to lighter stages, followed by rapid eye movement (REM) sleep. Stages of light and deep sleep are also known as non-rapid eye movement or NREM sleep (with Stage-1, Stage-2, and SWS sometimes termed N1, N2, and N3). In general, the character of these stages is influenced by factors such as circadian rhythms, such that cycles early in the night contain longer SWS periods, whereas later ones contain longer REM periods.

Physiological signals during wakefulness are chaotic. Fast, low-amplitude rhythms predominate in the EEG, muscle tension varies from moderate to high levels, and wakeful rest with the eyes closed produces a prominent occipital alpha rhythm, though with larger amplitudes in some people than in others. The alpha rhythm is most strongly observed over occipital regions, particularly during periods of rest with the eyes closed.

Stage-1 sleep appears at sleep onset with the appearance of quick vertex waves, rolling eye movements, and the decline of the alpha rhythm. This stage is considered to be the bridge between sleep and wakefulness, characterized by brief hallucinations and a low arousal threshold, meaning subjects can be easily awoken by external stimuli.

During stage-2 sleep, the predominant EEG rhythm is theta (4–8 Hz) with occasional *K-complexes*, which are high-amplitude deflections at approximately 0.8 Hz. Stage-2 also includes *sleep spindles*, which are short bursts of sigma activity at 11–16 Hz. Slow oscillations appear to originate in the frontal cortex (Cash et al. 2009), whereas spindles begin in the thalamus and continue as a series of reverberating thalamocortical oscillations (Morison and Bassett 1945). Arousal thresholds increase, which may connect to the findings that K-complexes and sleep spindles both coincide with reduced stimulus processing (Cote et al. 2000; Dang-Vu et al. 2010, 2011; Schabus et al. 2012). Stimuli can additionally elicit K-complexes and

spindles (Cash et al. 2009; Sato et al. 2007), and K-complexes are especially prominent after emotional or personally-relevant stimuli (e.g. one's own name) (Brain 1958; Bremer 1954; Oswald et al. 1960). For these reasons, K-complexes and spindles have been proposed to protect sleep by preventing unnecessary arousals from occurring. Because K-complexes in stage-2 sleep resemble slow oscillations in SWS in frequency, amplitude, and origin (Cash et al. 2009), stage-2 sleep can be considered a transitional bridge to SWS.

No naturally occurring brain state differs more from wakefulness than SWS. Slow, high-amplitude oscillations functionally segregate neuronal firing into discrete time bins, acting as the orchestrator of large-scale hyperpolarization and depolarization across the brain. Each oscillation has a down-state, during which there is a large-scale bias towards hyperpolarization and low neuronal firing, as well as an up-state, when there is bias towards depolarization and high neuronal firing (Möller et al. 2011). Spindles persist into this stage, beginning most frequently during the slow oscillation up-state. Activation from neuromodulator systems prevalent during wake, such as those mediated by acetylcholine (ACh) and cortisol, wanes greatly during SWS (Diekelmann and Born 2010). Finally, arousal thresholds are highest in this stage (Rechtschaffen and Kales 1968).

After SWS, the brain progresses back towards lighter stages, and then to REM. Physiologically, REM resembles wakefulness in a number of ways. The EEG shows high-frequency, low-amplitude activity and neuromodulator levels for ACh and cortisol resemble their waking levels (Diekelmann and Born 2010). Subjectively, REM coincides with dreaming episodes more than any other stage (though dreaming also occurs in other stages). Despite these similarities between REM and wakefulness, there are obviously major differences. Muscle activity is nearly completely suppressed during REM. Brain areas involved in self-monitoring show dramatically lowered activity, whereas emotional areas reach higher levels than wake (Nir and Tononi 2010), likely corresponding to the emotionality and lack of self-awareness during dreams. Finally, arousal thresholds during REM vary widely, although the dreaming brain's ability to incorporate and re-interpret information coming from the outside world has been known at least since the days of Freud and postulated at least since Aristotle (Freud 1913).

In the following sections, we will discuss sleep's unique role in learning and memory processes.

Sleep as an Ideal State for Memory Reactivation

As with many important findings in psychology, studies on the role of sleep in memory began by accident (Jenkins and Dallenbach 1924). The story of this accident begins with Hermann Ebbinghaus, the German psychologist who pioneered experimental research on human memory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. His studies mostly consisted in presenting auditory strings of nonsense syllables and measuring how well they were remembered at various

retention intervals. Arguably his most influential finding came from what is known as the forgetting curve (Ebbinghaus 1885). Not only does memory fade over time, it does so in a systematic and mathematically predictable way. Forgetting occurs rapidly just after learning and less and less so over time, resulting in the curve he championed. However, in creating this curve an anomaly repeatedly crept in: forgetting was drastically lessened when the intervals included sleep than when they did not. Ebbinghaus largely ignored this, perhaps because he had no plausible explanation for it, but Jenkins and Dallenbach (1924) famously followed up the anomaly. Indeed, their extensive study showed that sleep, as compared to wake, benefits memory.

Approaches to Sleep Research and Multiple Types of Memory

Researchers have implemented three general approaches to isolating the importance of sleep: (1) testing memory retention across sleep versus wake intervals, (2) restricting sleep, either to particular parts of the night or to specific stages, (3) manipulating the conditions of intact sleep using pharmacology, sensory, or electrical stimulation. The first approach is effective for testing whether a task could be sleep-dependent; however, it produces rather limited conclusions given that sleep intervals can produce different arousal levels than wake intervals and that wake intervals can entail more interference than sleep intervals. Greater confidence can be reached using the second and third approaches. Indeed, these three approaches can provide increasingly more convincing evidence towards establishing causal relationships between sleep and memory.

Since Jenkins and Dallenbach's (1924) landmark study showing sleep benefits for declarative memories, sleep has been shown to affect nearly every type of memory. Well-established research paradigms have been used to show that sleep benefits (1) motor sequence learning (Barakat et al. 2011; Brawn et al. 2010a; Cohen et al. 2005; Fischer et al. 2002; Fogel and Smith 2006; Gulati et al. 2014; Korman et al. 2007; Kuriyama et al. 2004; Manoach et al. 2009; Maquet et al. 2000; Morin et al. 2008; Nishida and Walker 2007; Rasch et al. 2009; Robertson et al. 2004; Song and Cohen 2014; Walker et al. 2002b, 2003, 2005; Wamsley et al. 2012); (2) procedural memory (Huber et al. 2004; Landsness et al. 2009; Plihal and Born 1997; Smith and MacNeill 1994; Tamaki et al. 2008); (3) visual perceptual learning (Frank et al. 2001; Gais et al. 2000; Karni et al. 1994; Mednick et al. 2002, 2003, 2008; Stickgold et al. 2000); and (4) auditory perceptual learning (Brawn et al. 2010b, 2013; Fenn et al. 2003; Gaab et al. 2004; Shank and Margoliash 2009). Other aspects of cognition that show improvement across sleep include anagram problem-solving (Walker et al. 2002b), statistical learning (Batterink et al. 2014; Batterink and Paller 2015; Durrant et al. 2011), language abstraction in infants (Gómez et al. 2006; Lany and Gómez 2008), and creative insight (Wagner et al. 2004; Yordanova et al. 2012). And of course, sleep replenishes attention, processing speed, rational decision-making, and many other cognitive processes that go beyond the scope of this chapter.

Understanding the mechanisms underlying these findings depends on elucidating how memory relates to hallmarks of sleep physiology. It has often been tempting to seek simplistic assignments between sleep stages and memory types, as if there were always one-to-one relationships. Varying methods, contradictory findings, and lumping disparate tasks into a single category have accounted for much of the confusion on this point. Countless other factors have likely had blurring effects as well—task difficulty and extent of learning influence sleep, which likely influences sleep's role in retention (Gais et al. 2002; Kuriyama et al. 2004); species differences in their learning aptitudes and sleep physiology (Buzsáki et al. 2013); human population and individual differences (Fenn and Hambrick 2012); the time between learning and sleep (Benson and Feinberg 1977); circadian differences between nap sleep and nocturnal sleep (Payne et al. 2008, 2012). However, a few general patterns have emerged, and relationships between sleep stages and learning may actually add nuances to how we understand differences between various learning categories.

Early on in sleep/memory investigations, the research focus rested entirely on REM sleep. This focus made intuitive sense, as the benefits of memory rehearsal were established, and a reasonable assumption would be that if a sleep benefit existed it would most likely come about through the reactivation of memories during dreams. Indeed, dreams were seen as a necessary phenomenon, as depriving REM sleep caused more subsequent entrances into it, as if it were a homeostatic need (Dement 1960). (The same homeostatic pressure can be observed for SWS). Accordingly, REM boosts were reported in the context of procedural learning prior to sleep, including avoidance conditioning (Smith et al. 1980), Morse code learning (Mandai et al. 1989), trampolining (Buechegger and Meier-Koll 1988), and other types of procedural learning (see Smith 2001 for a more extensive review). Later studies showed that REM sleep deprivation negatively affected learning on avoidance learning (Fishbein 1971), operant conditioning (Smith and Wong 1991), complex problem-solving tasks (Smith 1995), and visual discrimination (Karni et al. 1994). Furthermore, playing learning-related cues during subsequent REM sleep was found to strengthen complex procedural learning tasks such as Morse code learning (Guerrien et al. 1989), a complex logic task (Smith and Weeden 1990) and fear conditioning (Hars et al. 1985). These findings implicated a strong role for REM in procedural learning tasks.

This one-to-one relationship between procedural memory and REM sleep seemed to provide a clear and simple principle for sleep/memory theorizing, but it eventually broke down. For example, simpler motor tasks, such as explicit motor sequence learning and visual rotor pursuit, relied on NREM stages, especially stage 2 (Nishida and Walker 2007; Smith and MacNeill 1994; Tamaki et al. 2008; Walker et al. 2002a; though see Fischer et al. 2002, where performance in an identical task correlates with REM). In addition, pharmacological REM suppression boosted, rather than impaired, this type of learning (Rasch et al. 2009). To preserve some sort of REM sleep mapping, one way to potentially account for these findings was to invoke the idea that simpler procedural memory tasks rely on NREM sleep, whereas more complex ones rely on REM sleep (Smith et al. 2004).

On the other hand, the story grew yet more complex with new evidence implicating SWS in procedural tasks. For example, performance in a motor adaptation task correlated with measures of SWS (Huber et al. 2004), and impairments were found after SWS deprivation (Landsness et al. 2009). Also, some procedural knowledge acquired with awareness of learning can be modulated by learning-related cues during SWS (Antony et al. 2012; Cousins et al. 2014; Schönauer et al. 2014).

Finally, the preponderance of extant evidence indicates that NREM sleep underlies the consolidation of declarative memories. This is presented with a caveat that declarative memories are nearly universally studied now as item or paired associations. Studies investigating SWS and REM deprivation separately showed that, while REM deprivation had no effect on simple associations, it impaired declarative memory for full stories (Empson and Clarke 1970; Scrima 1982; Tilley and Empson 1978). Full stories are arguably more complex than associations, which accords with the role of REM in other complex cognitive tasks, such as complex procedural learning (see above), creativity in the remote associates task (Cai et al. 2009), solving anagrams (Walker et al. 2002a), Tower of Hanoi problems (Smith and Smith 2003), and categorical probabilistic learning (Djonlagic et al. 2009). Therefore, the role of REM sleep in declarative memory could be understated by the choice in tasks typically employed in these studies.

We will now delve deeper into the role of sleep, particularly NREM sleep, in declarative memory processing. We will again take a historical perspective and cover a wide range of converging evidence using different methods.

Passive vs. Active Role for Sleep in Declarative Memory

In the early part of the century, retrograde interference was one of the better-known characteristics of memory (Müller and Pilzecker 1900). As a result, Jenkins and Dallenbach (1924) ascribed sleep only a passive role in memory, in providing a temporary reprieve from constant encoding during wake. This hypothesis was plausible; indeed, an alternative view only became prominent a half-century later.

The first counter-evidence came with a pair of studies in the 1970s. First, Yaroush et al. (1971) measured memory retention over three 4-h intervals: the first half of the night, containing large amounts of deep NREM sleep; the second half of the night, containing large amounts of REM; and during 4 h of daytime wakefulness. Retention over the first 4 h of sleeping consistently trumped that for the other two conditions, indicating there may be something to NREM sleep physiology that specifically reduced forgetting. However, it was possible the effects could be explained by circadian factors, contributions from less predominant stages, or that NREM offered more of a release from interference, especially as the EEG during REM more resembled wakefulness and possibly interference from dreams. This partial sleep restriction method has also been used successfully (Plihal and Born 1997; Smith et al. 2004) to replicate the link between early, NREM-rich

sleep and declarative memory while showing that procedural memories benefit more from the later, REM-rich part of the night. The second 1970s study investigated memory retention with an equivalent amount of sleep and wakefulness, but allowed for sleep to come immediately or later on in the 24-h interval (Benson and Feinberg 1977). Better memory after immediate sleep showed that the total amount of overall interfering wakefulness could not alone explain the role of sleep in memory [a finding replicated by Gais et al. (2006), Payne et al. (2012), and Talamini et al. (2008)].

Converging evidence for memory replay during sleep accrued from neuronal reactivation in cellular physiology in the 1980s–1990s and human behavioral manipulations performed in the 2000s. The findings from cellular physiology will be discussed in the next section. First, it is helpful to cover how the behavioral studies have unfolded.

In Ellenbogen et al. (2006), Ellenbogen and colleagues set out to test whether sleep helped stabilize a memory by experimentally inducing interference. Participants learned A–B paired associates and then experienced a 12-h sleep, 12-h wake, or 24-h sleep-then-wake interval (among other conditions). Subsequently, they returned to the lab and learned A–C associates before tests on the original A–B pairs. As predicted, comparing 12-h conditions revealed superior memory for sleep over wake. However, if sleep protected memories from interference, the investigators argued, participants in the 24-h sleep-then-wake interference condition should perform better than the 12-h wake condition, even though the interval was longer and they had more time awake. This is indeed what they found.

Additional evidence for memory replay during sleep that included data on sleep physiology was produced by directly manipulating the conditions of NREM sleep. Gais and Born (2004) studied the role of low ACh levels during NREM sleep. They found that administering ACh agonists to prevent these low levels interfered with retention. Along with evidence that cholinergic activity suppresses output from the hippocampus to extrahippocampal regions (Chrobak and Buzsáki 1994; Hasselmo and McGaughy 2004), these findings suggest the low ACh levels during NREM sleep create an important state for consolidation. Using a novel approach to link SWS with memory processing, Marshall et al. (2006) directly manipulating slow oscillations using transcranial direct current stimulation at 0.8 Hz. This oscillating current, compared with sham stimulation, significantly boosted both slow oscillations and declarative memory, and thus strongly linked slow oscillations to memory consolidation.

These slow oscillations are not the only facet of sleep physiology apparently playing a role in memory processing. Despite the abundance of divergent theories about sleep spindles, as described above, they have emerged as a key physiological factor in memory consolidation. Numerous studies have demonstrated correlations between spindles and motor memory consolidation (Barakat et al. 2011; Kurdziel et al. 2013; Nishida and Walker 2007; Rasch et al. 2009; Tamaki et al. 2008; Walker et al. 2002a), as well as with declarative memory consolidation (Clemens et al. 2005, 2006; Cox et al. 2012; Schabus et al. 2004; Studte et al. 2015; van der Helm et al. 2011). However, these correlations are complicated by another line of

research showing that spindles positively correlate with general cognitive abilities (Bódizs et al. 2009; Fenn and Hambrick 2015; Schabus et al. 2006, 2008), leaving open the possibility that any memory effects are merely secondary to general cognitive effects that indirectly influence learning.

Evidence for a causal role for spindles in memory consolidation has slowly accumulated. Many researchers have employed intra-subject measures comparing learning and non-learning (control) sleep to control for individual differences. Gais et al. (2002) first showed that learning boosted spindle density during subsequent sleep. Spindle density correlated with memory at both pre- and post-nap tests, but not memory change across the nap. Schabus et al. (2004, 2008) found no boost from learning, but did find a correlation between experimental-control group density and memory retention, meaning that individuals with increased spindles showed better improvements. Schmidt et al. (2006) found that difficult learning (though not easy learning) boosted and correlated with sleep spindles, suggesting that spindles may effect changes depending on cognitive demands. Finally, learning-related spindle boosts arise in the rodent EEG (Eschenko et al. 2006) and in human epilepsy patients undergoing novel training on a brain-computer interface (Johnson et al. 2012). In a heroic effort, Bergmann et al. (2012) showed using combined fMRI-EEG that spindle amplitude increased in a specific set of brain regions related to learning but in other areas unrelated to learning. However, this increase correlated with pre-sleep memory but not with memory change across the nap.

Another indirect line of support for spindles comes from methods aimed at boosting slow oscillations. Marshall et al. (2006) could not measure spindle activity during stimulation due to artifacts caused by the current, but did find enhanced slow oscillatory activity between successive 5-min stimulation periods. Intriguingly, during these 1-min non-stimulation periods, slow spindle power was enhanced. Bolstering these findings, a later study found that playing two auditory noise bursts in time with slow oscillation up-states can similarly boost slow oscillatory power and memory (Ngo et al. 2013). This auditory stimulation protocol also boosted fast spindles, which positively correlated with memory retention. Using a different variation on this general methodology, Ong et al. (2016) also showed that acoustic stimulation to increase slow oscillations also produced an increase in fast spindles. In another follow-up experiment, Ngo et al. (2015) showed that playing four auditory bursts during up-states had no greater effect on memory than the two-burst condition, and did not elicit a further boost in fast spindle power. Altogether, these studies show that spindles may represent an essential factor mediating the effect of increased slow oscillatory power on memory enhancement.

Using a very different approach, Mednick et al. (2013) delivered the most convincing causal evidence that spindles benefit memory to date. They found that delivering zolpidem (Ambien) boosts spindle density without increasing slow oscillation power. Furthermore, spindle density increases under zolpidem predicted within-subject memory retention improvements. Although zolpidem increased time in SWS, neither this SWS measure nor slow oscillatory power predicted memory improvements under zolpidem. In a follow-up study, a similar effect of zolpidem was found on emotional memories (Kaestner et al. 2013).

In summary, there is good evidence that slow oscillations and spindles benefit memory. We will now discuss how these measures of cortical activity fit together with events occurring in the hippocampus, where newly formed memories stir.

Memory Replay During Sleep

By the 1980s, it was clear the hippocampus played an important role in forming new memories and that memories underwent a period of consolidation. However, the specific hippocampal mechanisms responsible for driving this process were largely unknown. György Buzsáki et al. (1983) described a physiological process consisting of a sharp wave in the local field potential followed by a high frequency burst (150–250 Hz, termed a ripple) occurring uniquely in the hippocampus. Intriguingly, these events were most prevalent during NREM sleep (Buzsaki 1986; Hartse et al. 1979). Buzsaki (1989) prophetically proposed that they played a role in memory consolidation. However, it was difficult to corroborate this view at the time, as evidence linking sharp-wave/ripples (SWRs) to specific memory traces was lacking.

The evidence for replay came in steps. First, Pavlides and Winson (1989) showed that hippocampal place cells with enhanced activation during wake continued to show enhanced activation during sleep. While intriguing, there remained the possibility that each cell simply kept firing on its own as a homeostatic mechanism without any relation to other cells. Wilson and McNaughton's (1994) seminal study put this concern to rest and largely legitimized future studies on sleep and memory relationships. They recorded from numerous hippocampal place cells in the hippocampus before, during, and after a rat explored a novel spatial environment. Remarkably, cell pairs that fired together while the rat explored the environment similarly fired together during post-learning sleep. Because these cells did not fire together during pre-learning sleep, the post-learning results can be attributed to learning rather than merely a function of neurons that were already highly connected.

Wilson and McNaughton's findings inspired numerous studies that expanded upon how and when replay occurred. Not only do previously co-activated place cells correlate during post-learning sleep, they fire in the same order (though with less fidelity), as if one could read out the spatial location the rat was traversing during sleep (Louie and Wilson 2001; Skaggs and McNaughton 1996). Replay of place-cell firing patterns occur most commonly during hippocampal SWRs (Dupret et al. 2010; Kudrimoti et al. 1999; O'Neill et al. 2006, 2008; Pennartz et al. 2004; Peyrache et al. 2009). Enhanced co-firing of cell pairs during wake increases replay during sleep (O'Neill et al. 2008). In relation to activity in other parts of the brain, SWRs overlap with and slightly precede sleep spindle events in other areas such as the ventral striatum (Lansink et al. 2009) and neocortex (Siapas and Wilson 1998). Moreover, wakeful hippocampal-neocortical (Ji and Wilson 2007) and neocortical-neocortical (Hoffman and McNaughton 2002) firing patterns replay during sleep.

Other details about the speed, conditions, and timing of replay have also been uncovered. Place-cell replay patterns become compressed by a factor of 6–7x during sleep (Euston et al. 2007), occur for extended events spanning as long as 10 m of track over 60 s (replaying at approximately 8 m/s) across multiple SWRs (Davidson et al. 2009), and also occur, though to a lesser extent, during wake (Carr et al. 2011; Diba and Buzsáki 2007; Dupret et al. 2010; Karlsson and Frank 2009).

Though ensemble reactivations occur most frequently during SWRs, one could argue that the large-scale synchrony that encompassed SWR events reflected previous neuronal firing without relating to memory. However, a few findings speak against this idea. First, learning (Eschenko et al. 2008; Ramadan et al. 2009) and LTP (Behrens et al. 2005; Buzsáki 1984) boost SWRs during subsequent NREM sleep. Second, reactivation events are specific to learning-related ensembles (Dupret et al. 2010; Peyrache et al. 2009) and correlate with memory retention (Dupret et al. 2010). Third, and most definitively, manipulating SWRs alters memory. Imposing replay with artificial stimulation during SWS SWRs enhances fear memory (Barnes and Wilson 2014). Suppressing SWRs impairs memory both when done during learning in a spatial working memory task (Jadhav et al. 2012) and during subsequent sleep when rodents learn a maze over a series of days (Ego-Stengel and Wilson 2009; Girardeau et al. 2009). These studies provide a crucial causal link to the role of hippocampal SWRs and memory consolidation. Since hippocampal replay occurs most frequently during SWRs, they constitute strong indirect evidence for the role of replay in memory consolidation.

Early neuroimaging studies using positron emission tomography gave the first and currently most illustrative evidence of reactivation on a systems-level. Maquet et al. (2000) showed learning-specific activation of brain areas during REM sleep that were previously activated by motor-sequence learning. In a similar vein, Peigneux et al. (2004) showed learning-specific hippocampal activation after learning a novel spatial environment, and this activation correlated with memory improvement. However, these studies showed enhanced activity over a long time scale. In contrast, one recent study (Deuker et al. 2013) enlisted multivariate methods to decode whether newly formed memories were reactivated during sleep and wake after learning. Possible reactivation patterns were observed, though puzzlingly only during stage-1 sleep. One shortcoming of this study relates to the difficulty participants had reaching deep sleep, but the presence of an effect nevertheless offers encouragement for pursuing these sorts of approaches.

Across a wide range of neuroscientific techniques, there is strong evidence that replay reflects learning. However, not all learning events are remembered in the long-term, so there must be a mechanism by which memories become differentiated over time. Below, we will cover how various factors influence spontaneous memory reactivation and how these influences may play a role in determining which memories endure.

Factors Influencing Spontaneous Reactivation

Humans form far more episodic memories than they can remember after some time passes, suggesting there are computational limits on the hippocampal-neocortical system. Thus, human memory is cluttered with competition among memories, forcing the system to devise a mechanism by which it can keep the memories deemed to be of the greatest future use, even if it comes at the expense of other, less relevant memories. Over the last decade, it has become increasingly clear that sleep plays a role in this prioritization (Fischer and Born 2009; Rauchs et al. 2011; Saletin et al. 2011; van Dongen et al. 2012b; Wilhelm et al. 2011; though see Baran et al. 2013).

A prominent theory suggests that memories of higher importance become “tagged” during wake by the hippocampus to undergo further consolidation during sleep (Morris 2006; Redondo and Morris 2011). The “synaptic tagging and capture” hypothesis (Morris 2006) suggests there are at least two steps in the consolidation process: an early-LTP process occurring at encoding that rapidly decays and a late-LTP process that involves hippocampal-neocortical dialogue and results in a relatively persistent neural trace. Central to this idea is that a molecular “tag” influenced by the early process (albeit not deterministically) signals the late process to enact enduring changes that occur during offline periods like sleep.

At the molecular level, some relationships have been worked out between early- and late-LTP, memory persistence, and NMDA- and dopamine receptor-dependence within the hippocampus (Wang et al. 2010). The amount of cell co-firing within 50 ms of learning during spatial exploration resulted in enhanced SWRs (O’Neill et al. 2008), and we previously mentioned links between learning and LTP on SWRs. Therefore, replay of tagged memories could provide a mechanism by which memories differentially persist.

Electrophysiological oscillations during wake that group neuronal activity across regions may play a role in the tagging process. At the cellular level, prefrontal neuron assemblies producing high theta coherence during learning were preferentially replayed during sleep SWRs (Benchenane et al. 2010). Similarly, a recent study in humans (Heib et al. 2015) showed theta power during word-pair encoding mediated the positive relationship between fast spindles and memory retention. Thus, theta power may reflect an effective encoding process that tags memories to undergo further consolidation.

Further evidence for differential memory tagging comes from experimental manipulations that alter the future relevance, reward, or emotional content of various items. Sleep benefits memory items that participants are directed to remember at encoding (Rauchs et al. 2011; Saletin et al. 2011), directed to bring to mind (Fischer et al. 2011), told later would be important (van Dongen et al. 2012), or would even be tested at all (Wilhelm et al. 2011). Importantly, sleep physiology appears to become biased in conjunction with this memory prioritization. Participants who expected to be tested showed a pronounced increase in slow oscillatory power and the number of spindles in relation to a control night (Wilhelm et al.

2011), and sleep spindles correlated positively with memory change for to-be-remembered items and also negatively with that for to-be-forgotten items (Saletin et al. 2011). Using a similar paradigm with fMRI, Rauchs et al. (2011) found that hippocampal activity at encoding predicted overnight changes in memory only for to-be-remembered items. Crucially, this activity failed to predict overnight changes for a separate group of subjects who were sleep-deprived. These results support the idea that memories tagged during wake undergo further processing during sleep (Morris 2006).

In rodents, a few studies found replay during SWRs occurs more frequently for memory traces that are motivationally relevant, as assessed by the presence or absence of reward (Lansink et al. 2008, 2009; Peyrache et al. 2009). Moreover, one study showed reactivation does not occur when rewarded locations are cued and no learning is required (Dupret et al. 2010), showing it relates directly with memory importance. Dopaminergic (DA) fiber bundles emanating from the ventral tegmental area (VTA) heavily control reward processes. The VTA contains fiber bundles that innervate the hippocampus and these have been shown to affect long-term potentiation within the hippocampus (Bethus et al. 2010; Lisman and Grace 2005). Additionally, one study found activity in the VTA and hippocampus predicts memory for high-reward cues (Wittmann et al. 2005), and another found functional interactions between these regions predicts long-term memory formation (Adcock et al. 2006). Therefore, DA may modulate hippocampal reactivation as a function of reward during offline periods such as sleep.

Indeed, a recent study showed direct links between VTA-hippocampal stimulation, neuronal reactivation, and memory retention (McNamara et al. 2014). The authors found that VTA neurons increased their firing rate while rats explored a novel environment. Optogenetic stimulation of VTA-hippocampal fibers increased subsequent reactivation of related memory traces, which could be blocked by administering DA antagonists before learning. Finally, this optogenetic stimulation improved memory retention. Another recent study showed that new memories could be implanted by pairing VTA-hippocampal firing with spontaneous place cell reactivation (de Lavilléon and Lacroix 2015). First, the authors separately found hippocampal place cells while rats explored a spatial environment and stimulations of VTA ensembles that animals found rewarding. Next, during offline periods of wake or sleep, spontaneous place cell reactivation was assessed online and paired with rewarding VTA-hippocampal fiber stimulation. When rats were re-introduced into the environment, they spent more time immediately in the location represented by the place cell undergoing co-activation with VTA-hippocampal fibers. Therefore, interactions between DA inputs to the hippocampus appear to strongly influence reactivation and subsequent memory retention (Atherton et al. 2015; but see Berry et al. 2015).

Two pharmacological studies support this idea by specifically highlighting the role dopamine plays in reward-enhanced consolidation. Wang et al. (2010) found that strong rewards induced persistent memory when weak rewards did not, and this enhancement could be blocked with dopamine antagonists. Additionally, in a study with human subjects, Feld et al. (2014) showed participants a number of objects

preceded by a high or low reward while administering either a dopamine agonist or placebo to participants. Under the placebo condition, high reward items were remembered better after sleep, but this difference was eliminated when participants received the dopamine agonist. These results suggest that high reward items would receive preferential processing during sleep under normal conditions, but the presence of the dopamine agonist made low items receive further processing.

Another biologically adaptive way some memories will be given priority comes from their level of emotional content (Richter-Levin and Akirav 2003). In some experimental paradigms, sleep appears to play a role in this prioritization. For instance, Payne et al. (2008) showed participants a series of pictures with a neutral or emotional central image against a neutral background (e.g., an undamaged car or a wrecked car, respectively, against a city backdrop). They tested participants after encoding and then again after 30 min, 12 h of wake, or 12 h of sleep. They found that sleep resulted in an enhanced selective benefit for emotional over neutral items relative to both the 30-min and 12-h wake intervals, demonstrating specificity for sleep in prioritizing maintenance of emotional material. The same research group has repeatedly replicated this effect (Bennion et al. 2015; Payne et al. 2012, 2015; Payne and Kensinger 2011), and other paradigms have produced comparable evidence supporting a role for sleep in emotional memory (Hu et al. 2006; Nishida et al. 2009; Wagner et al. 2001), with differential sleep effects lasting up to at least 4 years (Wagner et al. 2006).

Current conceptions of the mechanisms underlying emotional memory consolidation accord with this idea. Generally for emotional memories, amygdala activation leads to enhanced memory retention (Cahill et al. 1996; Canli et al. 2000), and enhanced amygdala-hippocampal interactions at encoding leads to better memory (Dolcos et al. 2004). Furthermore, elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol predict higher levels of amygdala activity for negative pictures (van Stegeren et al. 2005) and predict enhanced levels of selective memory enhancement for negative stimuli after sleep (Bennion et al. 2015). Thus, a plausible mechanism is that cortisol modulates amygdala activity, which, via interactions with the hippocampus, tags memories for further rehearsal during sleep (Bennion et al. 2015).

Emotional memory consolidation presents an intriguing case for the role of emotions in REM sleep. In dream reports, REM sleep is frequently associated with greater emotional content than other stages (Fosse et al. 2001) and REM sleep also shows higher levels of amygdala activity than NREM sleep and wakefulness (Maquet et al. 1996). Accordingly, several studies have found that emotional memory retention correlates with REM sleep (Nishida et al. 2009; Payne et al. 2012; Wagner et al. 2001). These findings may, however, appear surprising, as the emotional information would certainly be categorized as an example of declarative memory, which otherwise is linked with the involvement of NREM sleep. Indeed, unlike the case with nocturnal sleep, when participants take afternoon naps they typically only attain NREM sleep, and emotional memory retention correlates with SWS measures during the nap (Payne et al. 2015). There may be more to decipher about these disparate findings, as they hint at the complexity of competing and/or complementary processes operative during the various stages of sleep.

Illuminating findings have also arisen in the context of investigations showing that sleep does not selectively benefit emotional memories. Baran et al. (2012) and Lewis et al. (2011) found no interaction between emotional versus neutral information and sleep versus wake. Additionally, Atienza and Cantero (2008) found that sleep deprivation hurt memory for emotional items less than for neutral information, suggesting that in some paradigms emotional memories are simply less susceptible to interference and may remain robust with reactivation processes that occur during wake.

These apparently contradictory findings can be reconciled. The interaction of emotion and memory is complex, and the general assertion that emotions enhance memory is by no means universal (Mather and Sutherland 2011). For instance, memories can become enhanced or inhibited depending on numerous factors at encoding, such as whether they occur before, after, or simultaneously with emotional information, their level of association with the emotional content, the level of perceptual contrast, or the relevance of the information for current goals (see Mather and Sutherland 2011, for an extensive review). Furthermore, a complex set of hormonal factors (McGaugh 2000), interactions between the amygdala and the hippocampus (Dolcos et al. 2004) or vmPFC (Bennion et al. 2015), and emotional learning during consolidation (Dunsmoor et al. 2015) can affect memory beyond the time of encoding. The type of molecular tag, including the strength of the tag and what does or does not become tagged alongside emotional information likely differs based on experimental paradigm, and this will affect what role offline processes play in memory. This research topic deserves much further attention, as it could aid treatment for disorders such as depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (LaBar and Cabeza 2006).

In this section, we have outlined some major factors that naturally influence memory reactivation. In the next section, we will discuss a relatively new method that involves artificially targeting memories for reactivation at specific times during sleep.

Targeted Declarative Memory Reactivation

As with many aspects of science and human thought, speculations and unexplained findings supported the idea that TMR could work long before it became part of established and accepted ways of thinking. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a few studies showed altered memory after linking a stimulus with a learning episode and re-administering the stimulus as a memory cue during EEG-verified sleep. In some of the first successful studies employing TMR, Hars et al. (1985) enhanced active avoidance conditioning in rats by cueing during REM, whereas Hennevin and Hars (1987) impaired the same type of learning by cueing during SWS. Hars and Hennevin (1990) again found an effect for REM stimulation impairing spatial memories. In human participants, Smith and Weeden (1990) enhanced Morse code learning by re-playing learning-related auditory clicks during REM sleep.

To understand why these studies were largely ignored, it is important to note these studies preceded much of the reactivation literature that grounded sleep and memory at the neuronal level. Furthermore, the mechanisms at work during the various sleep stages were largely unknown. To be sure, the mechanisms for each of these effects are still somewhat mysterious, though with current knowledge of neuronal reactivation mechanisms in TMR, it is easier to envision their workings.

In a seminal study, Rasch et al. (2007) revived TMR and bolstered the idea that memories are actively reprocessed during sleep. Participants learned pairs of pictures on a spatial grid akin to a memory game, all while smelling a rose odor. Next, they slept in the lab, and some subjects received the rose odor again upon entering SWS. After waking up, those receiving the rose odor remembered significantly more pairs than those who did not. This method failed to boost memory when the rose cue was delivered during wake, or during REM, or when the rose odor was delivered during SWS but was not present during learning, demonstrating the specificity of reactivation of the learning episode.

Rudoy et al. (2009) followed up on this finding to investigate its specificity for individual memories (Fig. 2a). Participants learned 50 object-location associations against a background grid and a semantically related sound cue played concurrently with each visual object presentation (e.g. cat image—“meow” sound). During a subsequent afternoon nap, Rudoy used 25 sounds to cue half of the object locations during SWS. After the nap, participants recalled locations more accurately for objects associated with those sounds, in comparison to objects associated with sounds not presented during sleep, showing that TMR can be used to reactivate individual memories.

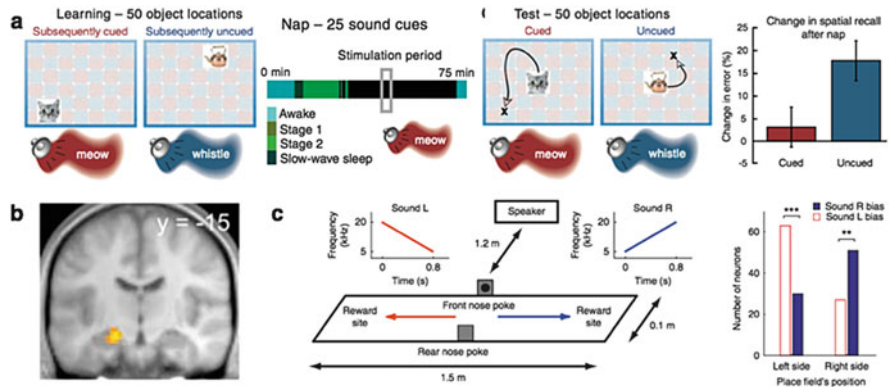


Fig. 2 Mechanisms of targeted declarative memory reactivation during sleep. (a) After unique auditory cues were paired with individual items, presenting those cues during subsequent SWS significantly enhanced memory (Rudoy et al. 2009). (b) Targeting memories using olfactory stimuli resulted in enhanced activity in the hippocampus (Rasch et al. 2007). (c) After unique cues were paired with different locations in a rectangular grid, presenting the cues during sleep resulted in enhanced firing of corresponding place cells (Bendor and Wilson 2012). Such biased cellular firing patterns presents a plausible mechanism by which targeting memories results in differential memory performance

Numerous other studies have subsequently shown TMR benefits and begun to elucidate the corresponding neural mechanisms. TMR enhances spatial memories via specific odors (Rihm et al. 2014), otherwise forgotten low-priority memories (Oudiette et al. 2013), memories of moderate initial strength (Creery et al. 2014), emotional memories (Cairney et al. 2015), and vocabulary words with the words as cues (Schreiner and Rasch 2014; Schreiner et al. 2015). It reduces subsequent retroactive interference (Diekelmann et al. 2011) and accelerates the consolidation process (Diekelmann et al. 2012). Additionally, stimulation boosts spindle power over learning-related regions (Cox et al. 2014), and enhances parahippocampal-mPFC connectivity (van Dongen et al. 2012a), implicating spindles and dialogue with the neocortex as possible underlying mechanisms.

In line with the expectation that targeted memory reactivation should resemble spontaneous memory reactivation, four studies suggest a role for replay in TMR. The first showed that cueing a bird's own newly-learned song during post-learning sleep elicited replay of neurons involved in forming the memory (Dave and Margoliash 2000). The second showed with fMRI that odor presence enhanced activity in the hippocampus relative to its absence (Rasch et al. 2007; Fig. 2b). The third involved cueing different sounds as rats explored the two sides of a rectangular environment (Bendor and Wilson 2012; Fig. 2c). Upon subsequent sleep, the sounds elicited corresponding place cell activity for each respective side of the grid, suggesting the cues directly activated the neurons involved in forming those memories. The fourth showed that patients with bilateral hippocampal lesions did not benefit from TMR and that memory benefits from TMR correlated inversely with amount of hippocampal damage (Fuentemilla et al. 2013), offering causal evidence that the hippocampus plays an important role in TMR.

Finally, TMR has been shown to influence other types of cognition such as creativity (Ritter et al. 2012), procedural memories (Antony et al. 2012; Cousins et al. 2014; Schönauer et al. 2014), fear memories (Barnes and Wilson 2014; Hauner et al. 2013; Rolls et al. 2013), and learning to reduce implicit social biases (Hu et al. 2015).

Basic Model of Sleep Reactivation and Major Open Questions

The aforementioned lines of evidence can be integrated into a basic model of declarative memory consolidation (Fig. 3). Hippocampal SWRs time-lock to slow wave up-states (Möller et al. 2006), neocortical spindles time-lock to slow wave up-states (Möller et al. 2011), and SWRs time-lock to spindle down-states during the slow-wave up-state (Ayoub et al. 2012; Siapas and Wilson 1998; Staresina et al. 2015). This scheme suggests that slow waves coordinate reactivation in the form of hippocampal-neocortical dialogue, like a conductor leading an orchestra (Möller and Born 2011). However, there are major open questions and a few possible contradictions about the processes underlying reactivation.

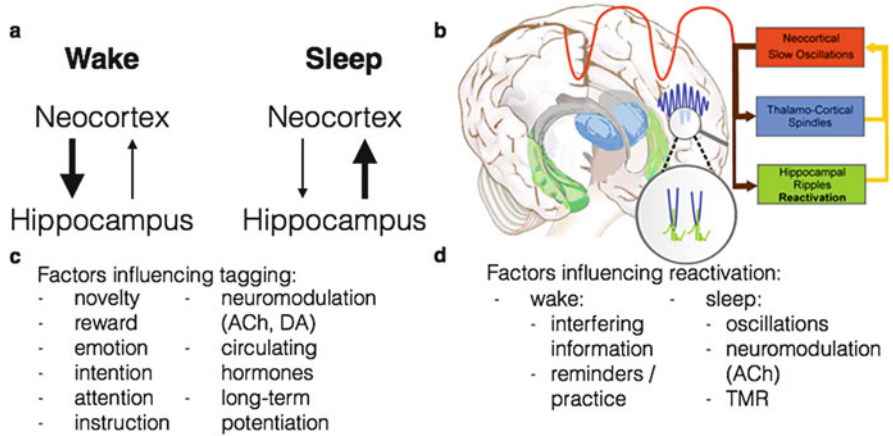


Fig. 3 Overview of sleep-dependent declarative memory consolidation. (a) Newly-encoded neural traces formed in the hippocampus become reactivated and consolidated via interactions with the neocortex. (b) Prominent theories suggest slow oscillations group hippocampal SWRs and thalamocortical spindles to coordinate hippocampal-neocortical transfer (from Born and Wilhelm 2012). (c) Numerous factors influence the filtering process determining which memories become later reactivated. (d) Reactivation processes operate on tagged neural traces to influence the later stability of the memory trace. Many of the factors in (c) and (d) are highly interrelated concepts from different levels of analysis

One major question involves the role of various parts of NREM sleep in declarative memory consolidation. A recent review (Genzel et al. 2013) argues there is likely a difference between lighter NREM sleep (stage-2 sleep and early SWS) and deep NREM sleep (late SWS). Slow oscillations are more frequently global in nature during light NREM sleep (Nir et al. 2011), which likely improves coordination between disparate brain areas such as the hippocampus and neocortex. Furthermore, SWRs (Clemens et al. 2007) and spindles (de Gennaro and Ferrara 2003) occur more frequently during lighter NREM stages, though this could be due to analysis issues with respect to identifying spindles by eye when they are superimposed on predominant slow oscillations (Cox et al. 2012). Efforts to boost memory via inducing slow oscillations with stimulation have begun in stage-2 sleep (Marshall et al. 2006; Ngo et al. 2013), creating the possibility that changes crucial for memory occurred in early NREM stages. Additional confusion might have arisen due to differences in sleep-stage terminology in humans and animal models, whereby SWS has been used as a term for all of NREM sleep (Genzel et al. 2013). Altogether, considering physiological differences in the hippocampus and neocortex, the distinction of early and late NREM for declarative memory is plausible and well worth further investigation.

The open issue above highlights another set of troubling complexities with respect to the role of spindles. As reviewed above, much of the evidence on spindles to date could be attributed to correlation rather than causation. Despite this, converging evidence from four sources implicates a direct role of spindles in

stabilizing memories: (1) methods showing causal roles for slow oscillations in memory also boost spindle power, suggesting that spindles could mediate the effect of slow oscillations on memory (Marshall et al. 2006; Ngo et al. 2013, 2015), (2) TMR induces spindle amplitude enhancements for learning-specific brain regions (Cox et al. 2014), (3) spindles have specifically been shown to enhance long-term potentiation between synapses *in vitro* (Rosanova and Ulrich 2005), and (4) a pharmacological method to induce spindles enhances memory (Kaestner et al. 2013; Mednick et al. 2013). However, none of these findings show that spindles benefit memory directly. For example, the pharmacological results could reflect changes in other underlying processes (e.g., hippocampal SWRs) that indirectly influence spindles. Additionally, real-time evidence for the role of spindles in reactivation remains obscure, and questions remain about whether neural measures of reactivation precede, become embedded in, or follow the spindle itself.

Other key questions arise about the nature of reactivation. On the cellular level, there is at least a basic understanding that hippocampal replay re-emerges during post-learning sleep and affects later memory retention (Ego-Stengel and Wilson 2009; Girardeau et al. 2009). To date, researchers investigating relationships between replay and behavior have understandably focused on the fidelity of offline reactivation to learning episodes. However, in addition to memory, sleep aids the generalization and abstraction of information, which may rely on reactivation (Stickgold and Walker 2013). In this light, findings in rodents (Karlsson and Frank 2009) that replay has higher fidelity during wake than sleep may prove illuminating. It would be interesting to discover if these abilities rely not on high-fidelity replay, but on some intermediate level of replay fidelity that allows for the incorporating the trace into other semantic networks or statistically similar episodes.

A different line of research has begun to outline the molecular mechanisms required for long-term plasticity (Takeuchi et al. 2014). However, it is currently unknown how cellular reactivation interacts with plasticity on the single neuron level. Specifically, would blocking reactivation (for instance, using optogenetics) prevent plasticity? Or vice versa, would blocking plasticity, as with protein synthesis inhibitors and/or post-translational modification regulators (Routtenberg and Rekart 2005) reduce reactivation?

On the systems level, there is no clear picture for what constitutes reactivation. Over a full night of sleep, learning-related neural activity becomes enhanced (Deuker et al. 2013; Maquet et al. 2000; Peigneux et al. 2004) and correlates with memory retention (Deuker et al. 2013; Peigneux et al. 2004), and TMR/fMRI studies have also implicated enhanced activity in medial temporal lobe structures (Rasch et al. 2007; van Dongen et al. 2012a). However, we currently lack solid real-time evidence of systems-level reactivation to correspond with results from neuronal reactivation, although methods such as EEG or MEG hold promise in this regard. Also, it remains unclear exactly how reactivation events are connected to hallmarks of sleep physiology such as slow oscillations and spindles.

Finally, the timescale for systematic changes in the neural locus of memories is not understood. Mander et al. (2011) showed that sleep, as opposed to wake, can

promote the acquisition of new declarative memories, and this improvement correlates with spindle activity. Sleep may therefore act as a way to “refresh” the hippocampus to learn anew the next day, which accords with findings that sleep enhances activation in the neocortex while reducing it in the hippocampus (Takashima et al. 2009). However, discrepancies exist between this model and the effects of hippocampal damage, which typically cause retrograde amnesia for memories formed over much longer time periods. Critically, there is scant experimental evidence on the extent to which reactivation occurs for memories more than a single day old. How long does it take for memories to become independent of the hippocampus? And does sleep reactivation continue to play a role beyond even the first day of memory formation?

Concluding Thoughts

In 2005, *Science* magazine released a list of the 125 biggest questions the field of science had yet to answer. Among them was, “Why do we sleep?” and “Why do we dream?” Both remain perplexing. Why we spend a third of our lives in near-complete inactivity has thus far eluded scientists. This is likely because, as with many solutions to environmental pressures during evolution, there is no singular purpose but rather a series of co-opted adaptations that best fit ecological niches.

Some lines of evidence suggest that sleep protects an agent from predators (Siegel 2009) and aids brain metabolism and restoration (Silva et al. 2004; Vyazovskiy et al. 2008, 2009, 2011; Xie et al. 2013; see Vyazovskiy and Harris 2013 and Tononi and Cirelli 2014 for helpful reviews). More pertinent to this chapter, a recent theory posited that certain types of brain plasticity may only become possible after the organism becomes detached from the environment, so sleep may be the price paid for plasticity (Tononi and Cirelli 2014). Considering the presence of circadian rhythms and sleep patterns in organisms without our complex system of memory (Cirelli and Tononi 2008), the argument that sleep evolved originally and primarily for memory is not strong.

However, that sleep plays a unique role in learning and memory has gradually become an irrefutable position. Throughout evolution, many organs and networks of cells originally evolved for one purpose and have later been used for another. The inner ear originally evolved in early vertebrates for balance, but later became involved in hearing (Torres and Giraldez 1998). The brain itself evolved to coordinate movement, but has clearly taken on numerous other abilities. Thus, it seems highly plausible that sleep originally evolved for purposes other than plasticity, but became co-opted later as new selection pressures incentivized the need for greater plasticity.

Behavioral, cellular, and systems level evidence suggests NREM sleep plays a special role, though perhaps not an exclusive role, in consolidating declarative memories. Reactivation is instrumental to our ability to retain information from a single, unique episode. One could easily envision a world in which no moment

effectively lived beyond the present. Humans forget most of their life's episodes, as the natural, entropic fate of any episode is oblivion. However, offline reactivation can rescue otherwise fleeting episodes, especially those of high priority like the experience of the young scientist on her interview outlined at the beginning of this chapter. That the hippocampal-neocortical system has evolved a way to solidify experiences that were formed only once is a marvel, and that it co-opted natural sleep processes to effect its end is another testament to nature's ability to find unique solutions to adaptation challenges.

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