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The Mandela Effect: An Accessible Article (Part II)

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The Mandela Effect

The Mandela effect originated from the observation that people wrongly recalled the passing away of Nelson Mandela in the 1980s. The death of Steve Biko, another prominent South African anti-apartheid activist, around this time possibly caused this misperception.

<https://medium.com/screen-captions/the-myth-of-the-mandela-effect-62c2e8fc2ca9>

Generally, the Mandela Effect describes instances when vivid, detailed personal recollections conflict with objective reality. For the experiencer, the abrupt realisation that their memory is incorrect can prove shocking. So much so, that a significant minority of people claim that their perceptions are valid and that reality has altered. Illustration of the Mandela effect are numerous and typically focus on inconsequential, subtle changing of familiar logos, brand names and media, and more significant events, such as celebrity deaths.

<https://theconversation.com/the-mandela-effect-and-how-your-mind-is-playing-tricks-on-you-89544>

The sharing of Mandela effect stories and illustrations via the internet has generated several untestable explanations. These include, the existence of multiverse encompassing parallel versions of reality, time slips and the notion that existence occurs within a virtual reality system. Although these are fascinating possibilities, psychologists provide explanations that are more mundane. Several of these centre on memory distortions. Particularly, confabulation (errors), cryptomnesia (confusing imagination with reality), and the misinformation effect (the observation that post-event information interferes with recall).

<http://www.debunkingmandelaeffects.com/common-explanations/>

Alongside these memory-based accounts, there are social psychological and cultural explanations, which receive less attention. Particularly, the idea that social norms shape individual expectations about the world. Explicitly, that acquired preconceptions influence perception. Illustratively, people rarely notice the flourish at the end of the bar that passes through the F on the Ford car logo. Highlighting this unusual feature, contradicts expectations of the letter F. In the case of the Mandela effect, advocates claim that this embellishment was not present previously. Actually, the additional loop has been part of the Ford logo since the early 1900's.

<http://phs.nebo.edu/news/weird-phenomena-mandela-effect>

Additionally, social transmission of inaccurate detail can generate alternate versions of information that lead to everyday misunderstandings. Certainly, the internet is awash with errors and inaccuracies. In the context of the Mandela Effect, searching for the incorrect term 'Fruit Loops' produces numerous references, which reinforce the notion that the names has changed over time to 'Froot Loops'.

<https://interestingengineering.com/mandela-effect-the-science-behind-our-collective-false-memories>

This is relates also to the debate over the exact contents of the famous Forrest Gump's line. The truth is alternative versions are correct because there are two versions in existence and readily available. In promotional material for the film, Gump states, "Life is like a box of chocolates". In the film, the line delivered by Tom Hanks is, "Life was like a box of chocolates". In this case, the perceived contradiction stems from the fact that people are unaware that different versions exist.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NdWPibas9I0>

The sharing of information on a global scale can also produce inadvertent errors. This is noticeable on Youtube, where videos frequently appear mislabelled and the incorrect citing of song lyrics and video commentaries is common.

Mandela Effects arise also when conclusions derive from limited consideration of historical material. This can occur for a variety of reasons. Mostly, paucity/overload of available information, multiple unverified sources, poor documentation and lack of context. These factors when examined concurrently can produce false, inconsistent impressions. Similar processes contribute to the production and maintenance of conspiracy theories. This is certainly true of the assassination of US President John F. Kennedy.

<https://theconversation.com/final-jfk-assassination-files-due-for-release-it-will-be-a-bumper-year-for-conspiracy-theorists-84082>

Supporters of the Mandela effect frequently cite that the number of people in the limousine at the time of the shooting has altered. The car contained six individuals: the driver Agent Bill Greer, Secret Service Agent Roy Kellerman, Texas Governor John Connally, Nellie Connally, President Kennedy and Jackie Kennedy. The common misconception is that there were only two passengers, alongside the agents. The perception that passenger numbers have changed is attributable to photographs and films taken from different angles, and ignorance of the car's design. The limousine has two auxiliary jump seats, which remained in position when the car housed additional passengers. Hence, the car could seat four or six passengers and the agents in the front seats and a partition often obscured the front two passengers from view.

<https://mysteriousuniverse.org/2018/05/dimensional-rifts-and-altered-history-the-mandela-effect-and-past-events/>

Where contradictory information exists believers in the Mandela Effect will often seek information that supports their belief, and disregard contrary evidence. Accordingly, confirmation bias stimulates a preponderance of incorrect but affirmative accounts. Collectively, these supportive social narratives using biased historiographical research methods can falsely validate pseudo histories.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pseudohistory>

The advance of the internet, where people can share unverified material, provides a fertile ground for the creation and dissemination of Mandela effect mythologies. Precisely, via websites, blogs, social media and forums serves to highlight and legitimise the Mandela effect. This is true to the extent that the Mandela effect has become widely accepted, i.e., a form of collective false wisdom.

<https://curiosity.com/topics/the-mandela-effect-is-when-groups-have-the-same-false-memories-curiosity/>

This demonstrates how unsubstantiated information can influence individual opinion and explains why fake news is so pervasive and socially significant. In the case of the Mandela effect, people are making genuine claims based on incorrect assumptions. Whereas, fake news has more malevolent motivations. Explicitly, it seeks to mislead and damage for the purpose of gain. Similarities with the Mandela effect derive from the manner in which people transmit and validate uncorroborated evidence. In addition, both obfuscate relationships between fact and fiction.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cjxv13v27dyt/fake-news>

Thus, the Mandela effect exists because the internet is a powerful tool for spreading (mis) information and people will engage with material because of interest and intrigue rather than concerns about

accuracy and authenticity. When they then come across others with similar views, this validates experiences and beliefs. Furthermore, many Mandela effect advocates will create information to promote their worldview.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/web-mistrust/201812/how-does-misinformation-spread-online>

The strength and endurance of the Mandela effect stems from a combination of factors. Significantly, instances where memories differ from reality are disorienting and surprising. Additionally, supporters of the Mandela effect forward fantastic theories that are intuitively intriguing, but impossible to refute. Furthermore, there is no single scientific explanation, which is applicable to all instances of the Mandela effect. Instead, because of the diversity of examples, a variety of psychological explanations exists.