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## An Elaborative Processing Explanation of Depth of Processing

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The purpose of this paper is to discuss a theoretical view that we think accounts for the results that have been organized under the rubric of "depth of processing" (to be called DOP). We argue that the variation in memory with DOP is a result of the number of elaborations subjects produce while studying the material, that these elaborations establish more redundant encodings of the to-be-remembered information, and that elaboration is what is critical, especially for long-term retention. Because extent of elaboration is the critical variable, a better spatial metaphor for the DOP phenomena might be "breadth of processing." We argue that depth of processing is as important to prose material as it is to the verbal learning material with which DOP is most commonly studied. With prose, elaborations take on another dimension of importance: They prove to be critical to the comprehension of the material. We make these points about elaboration, DOP, and prose processing with linguistic examples and interpretations of empirical results.

### What Mechanism Underlies DOP?

At one level, the term *depth of processing* just summarizes an intuitive viewpoint about what makes for good memory: One can ask subjects to perform various orienting tasks while processing material. One can consult one's intuitions as to which orienting tasks demand "deeper processing." The prediction is that subjects engaged in what seem to be deeper processing tasks will perform better. There exist no explicit rules, however, for measuring the "depth" of a task. It is not clear how well subjective intuitions about depth will hold over a randomly selected set of orienting tasks in terms of predicting memory performance.