The Medial Temporal Lobe Supports Mnemonic Discrimination

For Event Duration

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Abstract

Time has an integral role in episodic memory and previous work has implicated the medial temporal lobe in both representing time and discriminating between similar information. Here we developed a novel paradigm to test mnemonic discrimination for temporal duration, as previous work has largely focused on order or maintaining information over time. Thirty-five healthy, young adults completed a continuous-recognition, temporal discrimination task in which participants were tasked with detecting a change in stimulus duration on the order of 0.5 seconds. Whole-brain high-resolution fMRI data were acquired. Behavioral results indicate that participants were successful at detecting whether or not the stimulus duration changed. Further, fMRI analyses revealed that the left entorhinal and perirhinal cortices were differentially involved in encoding and retrieval, respectively. These findings support the notion of the entorhinal cortex being involved in the encoding of temporal context information as well as the perirhinal cortex representing the conjunction of item and context during retrieval.

1 INTRODUCTION

Temporal information is critical for episodic memory. For example, the memory of a college lecture contains both when the lecture occurred as well as the length of the lecture, in addition to the visual, spatial, and auditory properties. Temporal information is unique in the sense that the temporal properties do not directly map to any receptor in the way that other sensory modalities do. Rather, time is a "hidden dimension" (Howard et al., 2014); the information is inferred through intermediate neural representations rather than actual interactions with the environment. Recent work suggests that it is precisely due to such intermediate representations that disparate information is able to be associated (Howard et al., 2014; Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013; MacDonald et al., 2011). For example, differing stimulus modalities in the example above (visual presentations, auditory explanations) arrive at the central nervous system with discrete but meaningful temporal associations which are then integrated into a neural representation of time, thereby allowing for the disparate information to be associated into a unique and unitized (Clewett & Davachi, 2017) memory representation.

The hippocampus receives multi-modal input from various cortical regions, including the visual stream as well as parietal, prefrontal, and temporal cortices (Aggleton, 2012; Baldassano et al., 2016; Cabeza et al., 2008; Eichenbaum et al., 2012; Mayes et al., 2007; Qin et al., 2016; Rockland & Van Hoesen, 1999; W. Suzuki & Naya, 2014; Thierry et al., 2000). As such, the hippocampus is ideally situated to form associations among disparate sensory modalities, stitching them together into a single representation that will subsequently be retrievable (Backus et al., 2016; DuBrow & Davachi, 2014; Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013; Thavabalasingam et al., 2018). Recent work has demonstrated that the hippocampus also generates a representation of time: work by Pastalkova et al. (2008) demonstrated that the hippocampus contained a self-

organized internal mechanism by which temporal information was maintained. Further, more

recent modelling (Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013) has demonstrated that the hippocampus is

capable of producing scale-invariant representations of time. It is through these representations

that the recovery of contextual temporal information in episodic memory is possible, thereby

allowing for the "backward jump in time" (Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013). MacDonald et al.

(2011) has also shown that certain ensembles of hippocampal neurons, termed "time cells", had

peak activity at different and sequential periods, effectively serving to "bridge the delay period"

and maintain information through a representation of time. Further subsequent work by Howard

et al. (2014) argued that varying time scales may also be represented by differing neural

ensembles coding for different time constants. Such time constants are then thought to be

combined with unimodal input from various cortical regions, thereby forming "holistic

representation that captures the relationships between stimuli separated by time and space"

(Howard et al., 2014, p. 4703; Staresina & Davachi, 2009). As such, not only does the

hippocampus serve to stitch together multiple information modalities in time, it also constructs

the temporal foundation upon which such associations are formed.

Given the intimate relationship between time and information in episodic memory, it

follows that the hippocampus would be sensitive to event duration at different time scales. In

addition to the varying scales formed via neural ensembles (Howard et al., 2014), the

hippocampus has been shown to be sensitive to time scales both on the order of seconds (Barnett

et al., 2014; Thavabalasingam et al., 2018) as well as on the order of minutes (Montchal et al.,

2019). Given that pattern separation processes have been detected within hippocampal circuitry

(Gilbert et al., 1998, 2001; Gilbert & Kesner, 2006; Hunsaker & Kesner, 2013), that pattern

separation processes are information agnostic (Huffman & Stark, 2014; Yassa & Stark, 2011),

and hippocampal sensitivity to temporal information, we would expect the hippocampus to be

capable of discriminating between similar but different temporal properties within episodic

memory. Many have studied temporal pattern separation or mnemonic discrimination (Gilbert et

al., 2001; Hunsaker & Kesner, 2013; Kesner et al., 2002; Montchal et al., 2019), but these

paradigms have largely tested the sensitivity of hippocampal processes to order of stimuli. While

the order of events is important for episodic representations, event duration is also critical.

Importantly, while order contains temporal components, order itself is not inherently temporal,

given that "[o]rdinal information can be extracted from a temporal representation, but the

converse is not true" (Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013, p. 1212). This idea was addressed by

Montchal et al. (2019) when discussing the importance of considering the relationship of

sequence and duration, concluding "[i]t is likely that both types of information are important for

making temporal judgments" (p. 287). However, the literature on the ability of human subjects to

discriminate duration differences at short (1-2 second) time scales is sparse. Further, although

implicated by previous studies, there are no demonstrations that the human hippocampus

performs pattern separation for event duration. We therefore designed a set of experiments to (1)

determine whether participants can distinguish between highly similar temporal durations and (2)

implicate the important neural regions associated with detecting changes in temporal

information. In the first experiment we hypothesized that participants would be (a) sensitive to

changes in temporal duration on the order of 0.5 seconds, (b) more sensitive when fewer stimuli

separate the first presentation from the Target or Lure, and (c) more sensitive to increases than

decreases in stimulus duration. In the second experiment, we hypothesized that (d) the medial

temporal regions, and in particular the CA1, would be involved in successful Lure detection,

given that this region is largely implicated by extant research (Azab et al., 2014; Gilbert et al.,

2001; Howard et al., 2014; Kitamura et al., 2014; Montchal et al., 2019; Schapiro et al., 2016;

Thavabalasingam et al., 2018); we expected an increased BOLD response in the CA1 that

corresponded with successful Lure detection relative to an error. Further, we expected that (e) a

gradient would exist in which the anterior hippocampus (head) would show greater sensitivity to

temporal information (DuBrow & Davachi, 2014; Montchal et al., 2019) than more posterior

regions of the hippocampus.

2   METHODS – Behavioral Experiment 1

2.1   Participants

Forty healthy, young-adult participants were recruited from the university student

population. This number was determined via a priori G*Power (Bruin, n.d.) calculations, where

the test family = F tests, statistical test = ANOVA: repeated measures, within factors, Effect size

= 0.25, Power = 0.95, Number of groups = 1, Number of measurements = 4, Correlation = 0.5,

and Nonsphericity correction = 1; such input yielded a required sample size of 36. The inclusion

criteria consisted of speaking English as a native language and having normal or corrected-to-

normal vision. Exclusion criteria consisted of a history of psychologic disorder or brain injury,

and color blindness. The university's Institutional Review Board approved the research, and all

participants gave written informed consent prior to participation. Participants were compensated

for their time via course credit.

2.2   Temporal Discrimination Task

Task description. Each block followed a continuous-recognition paradigm in which a

continuous stream of trials was presented (Figure 1). Each trial consisted of a fixation cross (a

black cross on a white background) for 0.5s, the stimulus (a colored image of an everyday

object) for a variable duration (see below), a colored masking image to combat iconic memory

presented for 0.5s, and a response screen displayed for 2.5s. If the stimulus was novel (a Foil or

the first presentation of either the Target or Lure), one of three potential response screens was

presented at random, prompting the participant to indicate a judgment about a visual property of

the object via a button response. These response options were a) whether the object was Smooth,

Rough, or Sharp, b) whether the object was made of Metal, Plastic, or Other, and c) whether the

item's weight was Heavy, Medium, or Light. Each response option was presented an equal

number of times. The aim of these response options was to maintain engagement in the task as

the perception of time is related to attention (Coull et al., 2004; Radua et al., 2014). If the

stimulus had been presented before, (i.e., a Target or Lure), the response screen prompted the

participant to decide whether the stimulus was presented for either a Longer, Same Time, or

Shorter duration than the first presentation of the same stimulus. Targets were trials where the

same stimulus was presented with the same duration as the initial presentation. Lures were trials

where the same stimulus was presented but for a different duration: 1.5s if the first counterpart

was presented for 1s, and vice versa if the first was presented for 1.5s. In total, the earliest a

second presentation could occur, assuming Lag = 4 (see below) and all intermediate durations =

1s, was 17.2 seconds, and the latest was 57.6 seconds (Lag = 12, Duration = 1.5s). Note that

while it is possible that the second presentation could occur within a timeframe governed by

working memory, it was expected that the cognitive demand elicited by the first-presentation

response prompts would overwhelm the processes such that second-presentation responses are

reflective of episodic memory processes. Prior to the first block, the participant was instructed in

the task via a video with explicit instructions as well as a practice period, and no feedback on

performance was given during the task. Stimuli were presented in PsychoPy (v2.0, n.d.).

Figure 1. Temporal discrimination paradigm. A trial started with a fixation cross (0.5s, not
shown) and then a stimulus was presented for either 1 or 1.5s. Following the stimulus, a colored
mask was presented for 0.3s, and then a response screen (RS) was presented for 2.5s. Four RS
were possible: for first presentations one of three memory prompts for visual properties were
presented, and for second presentations a memory prompt for stimulus duration was presented.
Targets and Lures (second presentations) followed their first presentation counterpart by either 4
or 12 trials. Targets had the same duration as the first presentations, whereas Lures were
presented for 1.5s if the first counterpart was presented for 1s, and vice versa if the first was
presented for 1.5s.

Stimuli, duration, and lag. Stimuli for the task consisted of randomly sampling 324

images from the 570 stimuli used in the Mnemonic Similarity Task (Stark et al., 2019) stimuli

sets C-E, type "a", for each participant. The 324 stimuli were then assigned as either Target

(120), Lure (120), or Foil (84) trials. Target and Foil trials were presented for either 1 or 1.5

seconds (if the first presentation of the Target had a duration of 1 second, then the second

presentation also had a duration of 1 second). Lures were first presented for 1 or 1.5 seconds and

then the duration of the second presentation was adjusted by 0.5s, where if the first presentation

had a duration of 1s then the second presentation had a duration of 1.5s, and vice versa; in this

way all stimuli (Target, Lure, Foil) were presented for either 1 or 1.5s but Lure trials either

increased or decreased by 0.5s. Targets and Lures repeated after either 4 or 12 stimuli (Lag = 4,

12). With 324 stimuli, 240 of which repeated once, the total number of trials was 564. Duration

and Lag were counterbalanced such that (a) an equal number of stimuli were presented for both

durations of 1 and 1.5s (282 each), (b) an equal number of Targets were presented for both

durations (60 1s, 60 1.5s), (c) an equal number of Lures increased and decreased in stimulus

duration (60 increase, 60 decrease), (d) an equal number of Foils were presented for both

durations (42 each), and (e) an equal number of Targets and Lures repeated at Lag = 4 or 12 (60

Lag = 4, 60 Lag = 12). Further, each Lag (e.g., 4) had an equal number of trial durations for

Targets (30 1s, 30 1.5s) and Lures (30 increase, 30 decrease). The stimuli were presented in 6

blocks of 94 trials, where each block was counterbalanced for stimulus type (Target, Lure, Foil),

duration, and lag. Stimuli were presented in a pseudorandom order with the constraints of Lag

and number of trials. Each block contained 20 Targets (5 for each combination of Lag and

Duration), 20 Lures (5 for each combination of Lag and In/Decrease), and 14 Foils (7 of each

Duration).

2.3   Statistical Analyses

As there were two possibilities to incorrectly identify Targets and Lures in this

experiment, an adjusted signal-detection naming convention was adopted (Table 1). A correct

identification of Targets was termed "Hit-Same" (Hit_{Sa}) and incorrect identification was called

either "Miss-Long" ($Miss_L$) or "Miss-Short" ($Miss_S$) according to whether the participant

indicated if the Target duration increased or decreased with respect to the first presentation. For

Lures which decreased in duration (first presentation = 1.5s, second = 1s), correctly identifying

the stimulus was termed "Correct Rejection-Short" (CR_S), and incorrectly identifying the

stimulus was termed either "False Alarm-Long" or "False Alarm-Same" (FA_L, FA_{Sa}), according

to whether the participant indicated that the Lure was presented for a longer or same duration as

the first presentation, respectively. For Lures which increase in duration (first = 1s, second =

1.5s), correct identification was called "Correct Rejection-Long" (CR_L). Incorrect identification

of the increasing Lure was termed either FA_{Sa} or "False Alarm-Short" (FA_S). Note that while

some response types received the same classification, such as "Hit_{Sa}" resulting from correctly

identifying a Target of either 1 or 1.5s, individual classifications were maintained separate

during analyses.

Table 1

	Response		
Stimulus	Longer	Same Time	Shorter
Target (1s)	$Miss_L$	Hit_{Sa}	$Miss_S$
Target (1.5s)	$Miss_L$	Hit_{Sa}	$Miss_S$
Lure, Decrease (1s)	FA_L	FA_{Sa}	CR_S
Lure, Increase (1.5s)	CR_L	FA_{Sa}	FA_S

Response behavior classifications. Stimuli were presented for either 1 or 1.5s. Second
presentations were either Targets or Lures, where a Lure stimulus duration differed from the first
presentation by 0.5s. "Lure, decrease (1s)" corresponds to "Target (1.5s)", and "Lure, increase
(1.5s)" corresponds to "Target (1s)". Participants responded whether the second presentation was
presented for Longer (L), Same Time (Sa), or Shorter (S) than the first presentation.

A separate d' calculation was conducted for the 1-second and 1.5 second Target durations

in order to identify the response criteria, according to the adjusted formulas

$$d'_{1.5s} = z(pHit) - z(pFA)$$ Equation 3

where

$$pHit = \frac{(Hit_{Sa} + Miss_L)}{\# \ 1.5s \ Targets} \quad \text{and} \quad pFA = \frac{(FA_L + FA_{Sa})}{\# \ 1s \ Lures}$$

and

$$d'_{1s} = z(pHit) - z(pFA)$$ Equation 4

where

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$$pHit = \frac{(Hit_{Sa} + Miss_S)}{\# \, 1s \, Targets} \quad \text{and} \quad pFA = \frac{(FA_S + FA_{Sa})}{\# \, 1.5s \, Lures}$$

Note that while Hit_{Sa} and FA_{Sa} appear in both formulas, these response bins are kept separate in

response to their respective stimulus duration.

D-prime scores were then used as the dependent variable to investigate whether or not a

Lag, Duration, or interaction effect exists using a two-factor within-subject ANOVA utilizing a

Greenhouse-Geisser correction for any violations of sphericity, and d' scores were individually

tested against zero using the Student's t to determine if participant behavior differed from

chance. A d' score significantly different from 0 would indicate that participants are sensitive to

changes of stimulus duration on the order of 0.5 seconds (as in hypothesis [a]). A test of whether

the d' for stimuli of Lag=4 that is significantly greater than the d' associated with Lag=12 tested

hypothesis (b), and finally, a test of whether d' scores are greater for decreases in duration

relative to increases tested hypothesis (c). The FDR method for correcting for multiple

comparisons was used, when applicable.

3   RESULTS – Behavioral Experiment 1

Four participants were excluded due to computer malfunction, leaving a total n=36.

Outliers were detected according to the $1.5 \times$ IQR method; replacing outlier values with the

median value had no effect on the significance of test statistics and so all statistics reported

reflect the datasets where outliers were included. A two-factor within-subject ANOVA failed to

detect any effect of Duration, Lag, or interaction thereof on d' scores (all p-values > 0.05), while

one sample t-testing revealed that d'$_{1.5s}$ and d'$_{1s}$ scores differed significantly from zero (t(34) =

14.07, $p_{FDR} < .001$, 95% CI [1.13, 1.52]; t(34) = 13.83, $p_{FDR} < .001$, 95% CI [1.21, 1.63],

respectively). Further, these d' scores did not differ from each other according to paired t-testing

($p_{FDR} > .05$; Figure 2, Experiment 1). Together, the evidence suggests that participant

performance differs significantly from chance and that participants are equally sensitive

regardless of whether the Lure increases, decreases, or appears after Lag 4 or 12.

Figure 2. Boxplot of d' scores. 1.5s = 1.5 second Target, 1 second Lure; 1s = 1 second Target,
1.5 second Lure. *** = $p < .001$, * = $p < .05$.

4   METHODS – Behavioral Experiment 2

As no effect of duration, lag, or interaction thereof was detected in the previous analyses,

and given that the experiment lasted for approximately 45 minutes, we elected to reduce the

experiment length: the number of trials in each category was reduced by exactly one-half,

yielding 60 Targets, 60 Lures, and 42 Foils. The resulting experiment was still counterbalanced

for duration and lag as well as Target and Lure types but no longer powered to investigate

interactive effects of duration and lag, and had a duration of approximately 25 minutes. In order

to make sure that such a reduction would not affect the outcome, 34 more participants (16

Female, Age = 20.1±1.7) were recruited to participate in the shortened version of the experiment.

Participants gave written informed consent prior to participation. All methodologies and analyses

conducted, save the reduction of trial items, remain identical to those reported above.

5 RESULTS – Behavioral Experiment 2

In the reduced experiment replacing outlier values with the group median again had no

effect on test statistics and so all statistics reported include outliers. One-sample t-testing on the

$d'_{1.5s}$ and d'_{1s} scores demonstrated that participants performed above chance ($t(33) = 14.85$, p_{FDR}

$< .001$, 95% CI [1.08, 1.43]; $t(33) = 16.44$, $p_{FDR} < .001$, 95% CI [1.27, 1.64], respectively), but

this time we detected that participants were more sensitive in d'_{1s} than $d'_{1.5s}$ according to paired t-

testing ($t(33) = -2.22$, $p_{FDR} < .05$, 95% CI [-0.37, -0.02]; Figure 2, Experiment 2).

6 METHODS – fMRI Experiment

6.1 Participants

Forty healthy, young-adult participants were recruited from the Brigham Young

University student population in order to replicate the procedures of Temporal information is

critical for episodic memory. For example, the memory of a college lecture contains both when

the lecture occurred as well as the length of the lecture, in addition to the visual, spatial, and

auditory properties. Temporal information is unique in the sense that the temporal properties do

not directly map to any receptor in the way that other sensory modalities do. Rather, time is a

"hidden dimension" (Howard et al., 2014); the information is inferred through intermediate

neural representations rather than actual interactions with the environment. Recent work suggests

that it is precisely due to such intermediate representations that disparate information is able to

be associated (Howard et al., 2014; Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013; MacDonald et al., 2011). For

example, differing stimulus modalities in the example above (visual presentations, auditory

explanations) arrive at the central nervous system with discrete but meaningful temporal

associations which are then integrated into a neural representation of time, thereby allowing for

the disparate information to be associated into a unique and unitized (Clewett & Davachi, 2017)

memory representation.

The hippocampus receives multi-modal input from various cortical regions, including the

visual stream as well as parietal, prefrontal, and temporal cortices (Aggleton, 2012; Baldassano

et al., 2016; Cabeza et al., 2008; Eichenbaum et al., 2012; Mayes et al., 2007; Qin et al., 2016;

Rockland & Van Hoesen, 1999; W. Suzuki & Naya, 2014; Thierry et al., 2000). As such, the

hippocampus is ideally situated to form associations among disparate sensory modalities,

stitching them together into a single representation that will subsequently be retrievable (Backus

et al., 2016; DuBrow & Davachi, 2014; Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013; Thavabalasingam et al.,

2018). Recent work has demonstrated that the hippocampus also generates a representation of

time: work by Pastalkova et al. (2008) demonstrated that the hippocampus contained a self-

organized internal mechanism by which temporal information was maintained. Further, more

recent modelling (Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013) has demonstrated that the hippocampus is

capable of producing scale-invariant representations of time. It is through these representations

that the recovery of contextual temporal information in episodic memory is possible, thereby

allowing for the "backward jump in time" (Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013). MacDonald et al.

(2011) has also shown that certain ensembles of hippocampal neurons, termed "time cells", had

peak activity at different and sequential periods, effectively serving to "bridge the delay period"

and maintain information through a representation of time. Further subsequent work by Howard

et al. (2014) argued that varying time scales may also be represented by differing neural

ensembles coding for different time constants. Such time constants are then thought to be

combined with unimodal input from various cortical regions, thereby forming "holistic

representation that captures the relationships between stimuli separated by time and space"

(Howard et al., 2014, p. 4703; Staresina & Davachi, 2009). As such, not only does the

hippocampus serve to stitch together multiple information modalities in time, it also constructs

the temporal foundation upon which such associations are formed.

Given the intimate relationship between time and information in episodic memory, it

follows that the hippocampus would be sensitive to event duration at different time scales. In

addition to the varying scales formed via neural ensembles (Howard et al., 2014), the

hippocampus has been shown to be sensitive to time scales both on the order of seconds (Barnett

et al., 2014; Thavabalasingam et al., 2018) as well as on the order of minutes (Montchal et al.,

2019). Given that pattern separation processes have been detected within hippocampal circuitry

(Gilbert et al., 1998, 2001; Gilbert & Kesner, 2006; Hunsaker & Kesner, 2013), that pattern

separation processes are information agnostic (Huffman & Stark, 2014; Yassa & Stark, 2011),

and hippocampal sensitivity to temporal information, we would expect the hippocampus to be

capable of discriminating between similar but different temporal properties within episodic

memory. Many have studied temporal pattern separation or mnemonic discrimination (Gilbert et

al., 2001; Hunsaker & Kesner, 2013; Kesner et al., 2002; Montchal et al., 2019), but these

paradigms have largely tested the sensitivity of hippocampal processes to order of stimuli. While

the order of events is important for episodic representations, event duration is also critical.

Importantly, while order contains temporal components, order itself is not inherently temporal,

given that "[o]rdinal information can be extracted from a temporal representation, but the

converse is not true" (Howard & Eichenbaum, 2013, p. 1212). This idea was addressed by

Montchal et al. (2019) when discussing the importance of considering the relationship of

sequence and duration, concluding "[i]t is likely that both types of information are important for

making temporal judgments" (p. 287). However, the literature on the ability of human subjects to

discriminate duration differences at short (1-2 second) time scales is sparse. Further, although

implicated by previous studies, there are no demonstrations that the human hippocampus

performs pattern separation for event duration. We therefore designed a set of experiments to (1)

determine whether participants can distinguish between highly similar temporal durations and (2)

implicate the important neural regions associated with detecting changes in temporal

information. In the first experiment we hypothesized that participants would be (a) sensitive to

changes in temporal duration on the order of 0.5 seconds, (b) more sensitive when fewer stimuli

separate the first presentation from the Target or Lure, and (c) more sensitive to increases than

decreases in stimulus duration. In the second experiment, we hypothesized that (d) the medial

temporal regions, and in particular the CA1, would be involved in successful Lure detection,

given that this region is largely implicated by extant research (Azab et al., 2014; Gilbert et al.,

2001; Howard et al., 2014; Kitamura et al., 2014; Montchal et al., 2019; Schapiro et al., 2016;

Thavabalasingam et al., 2018); we expected an increased BOLD response in the CA1 that

corresponded with successful Lure detection relative to an error. Further, we expected that (e) a

gradient would exist in which the anterior hippocampus (head) would show greater sensitivity to

temporal information (DuBrow & Davachi, 2014; Montchal et al., 2019) than more posterior

regions of the hippocampus.

2   METHODS – 4 (the shortened experiment) and investigate any potential neural correlates of

discrimination for temporal duration. All participants were naïve to the task. In addition to the

inclusion and exclusion criteria defined above, exclusion criteria also consisted of

incompatibilities with the magnet or head coil, colorblindness and left-handedness, and the

capability to remain still for an hour. The university's Institutional Review Board approved the

research, and all participants gave written informed consent prior to participation. Participants

were compensated for their time via course credit, money ($20 USD), or a 3d-printed quarter-

scale model of their brain.

6.2   Temporal Discrimination Task and Statistics

The task was identical to that in section 4. Correspondingly, analyses of behavioral data

were conducted in an identical fashion to section 4.

6.3   MRI Acquisition

Functional and structural data were collected on a Siemens Tim Trio 3T MRI scanner at

the Brigham Young University MRI Research Facility, using a 32-channel head coil. T1-

weighted, T2-weighted, and T2*-weighted scans were collected from each participant. The T1-

weighted structural scan was acquired using a magnetization-prepared rapid acquisition with

gradient echo (MP-RAGE) sequence, according to the following parameters: TR = 1900 ms, TE

= 2.26 ms, flip angle = 9°, FoV = 218 × 250, voxel size = 0.97 × 0.97 × 1 mm, slices = 176

interleaved. A high-resolution T2-weighted scan was used to image hippocampal subfields

according to the following parameters: TR = 8020 ms, TE = 80 ms, flip angle = 150°, FoV = 150

× 150 mm, voxel size = 0.4 × 0.4 × 2 mm, slices = 30 interleaved; the T2 data were acquired

perpendicular to the long axis of the hippocampus. High-resolution multi-band echo-planar scans

were collected from each participant according to the following parameters: Multi-band factor =

4, TR = 2200 ms, TE = 45.2 ms, flip angle = 90°, acquisition matrix = 100 × 100 mm, voxel size

= 1.8 mm3, slices = 72 interleaved; the first 11 TRs were discarded to allow for T1 equilibration.

Finally, a reverse blip echo-planar scan was collected using the same parameters as the previous

protocol save that direction of acquisition was opposite (P>>A) and only 10 volumes were

collected.

6.4   MRI Data Pre-Processing

All pre-processing was conducted using the software packages dcm2niix (Li et al., 2016),

Analysis of Functional NeuroImages (AFNI; Cox, 1996), convert 3D (c3d; Yushkevich et al.,

2006) and Automatic Segmentation of Hippocampal Subfields (ASHS; Yushkevich et al., 2015).

AFNI and Mango (Lancaster et al., 2012) were used for visualizations.

T2*-weighted DICOMs were converted into NIfTI files. Field distortion was then

corrected by incorporating information from the reverse blip scan. Briefly, the median input of

all voxels from concatenated blip and experiment functional scans were individually calculated

and then the nonlinear transformation between the blip and experimental files were calculated

thereby producing warping and reverse warping vectors. These reverse warping files were then

used to "unwarp" the experimental files thereby recovering some signal in regions of high signal

distortion. The experimental volume with the minimum of voxel outliers was then extracted to

use as a volume registration base. To move data into template (MNI 152) space, the calculations

of (a) rigidly aligning the structural to the registration base (using an lpc+ZZ cost function), the

(b) non-linear warp of the structural file in original space to template space, and (c) the volume

registration (rigid transformation) of each volume to the registration base were concatenated and

applied to the functional data in native space such that all volumes were aligned with the

template utilizing a diffeomorphic transformation via a single interpolation. A binary extension

mask corresponding to regions within the domain with sufficient minimum signal was

constructed; data within this region were scaled by the mean signal.

Single-subject regression used a generalized-least-squares fit utilizing a nonlinear

residual maximum likelihood estimate to determine the best fitting autoregressive-moving-

average model, where the timeseries corresponding to an eroded white matter mask was utilized

as a nuisance regressor. Centered motion regressors for six degrees of freedom were included,

and volumes that were (a) outliers in terms of total volume signal (>10% of the voxels in the

volume had outlier signal) and (b) either preceded or were involved in a motion event (>0.3°

rotation) were censored. Regressors for the various behaviors (described below) were modelled

with a duration modulated block function. Two single-subject regressions were conducted, where

the BOLD signal associated with behavioral responses was modelled using a boxcar convolution

with the canonical hemodynamic response. First, test trials (when participants made their

response) were modeled for correct and incorrect responses to Targets (Hits and Misses,

respectively) and Lures (Correct Rejections and False Alarms, respectively); only the time

between the start of the response screen and participant response was modelled. Second,

responses to encoding the stimuli (when the stimulus was onscreen) were modeled for

subsequent behavioral responses; the entire stimulus duration was modelled. Finally, participants

that had more than 10% of their total volumes censored would have been excluded from all

subsequent group-level analyses but no participant reach this criterion.

For *a priori* analyses, behavioral parameter estimates (β-coefficients) were extracted

from anterior and posterior hippocampal regions of interests (ROIs) from each deconvolution

utilizing masks that were previously generated in template space. Briefly, ASHS was used to

segment the medial temporal regions of high-resolution T2-weighted scans for a number of

participants. Joint Label Fusion (H. Wang et al., 2013) then utilized this set of segmentations to

generate template hippocampal subfield priors. For this experiment, template MTL masks were

split along the anterior-posterior axis at X=-20, the CA2, CA3, and DG masks were combined,

and then masks were resampled into functional dimensions. Any voxels labeled by more than

one mask were excluded, thereby producing anterior and posterior, right and left Subiculum,

CA1, and CA2-3-DG masks. A two-factor within-subject MANOVA was then used to

investigate the role of hippocampal structures in the modeled behaviors, where factor A was the

ROI, factor B the behavioral responses, and the parameter estimate was the dependent variable.

ROIs in the left hemisphere were treated as independent from the right, and a separate analysis

was conducted on the anterior and posterior masks for both the encoding and response estimates.

The FDR method was used to correct for multiple comparisons.

For exploratory analyses, an intersection mask was constructed, which indicated where

meaningful signal exists for both T1- and T2*-weighted scans across all participants, and

multiplied with a gray matter mask that had been generated in template space, thereby producing

an intersection-gray-matter mask that was used to constrain the number of voxels on which

analyses were conducted. Further, a small volume mask was generated in a similar fashion but

only using masks associated with the gray matter of bilateral hippocampi, entorhinal cortex,

perirhinal cortex, and parahippocampal cortex. Noise was modelled by calculating the

autocorrelation function of single-subject regression residuals from voxels which lay within the

generated masks, and these parameter estimates were then used in Monte Carlo simulations to

generate multiple-comparison correction criteria. A multivariate model was used to investigate

any regions that show differential signal associated with the various behaviors modelled where

the behaviors were modeled as within-subject factors. Clusters which showed differential activity

were then used to extract mean parameter estimates in order to report the (a) difference in

parameter estimates and (b) statistics. All scripts used for running these experiments and

analyzing the data are available at https://github.com/nmuncy/MST_Temporal.

7   RESULTS – fMRI Experiment

7.1   Behavioral Results

From the 40 participants recruited, five were excluded from analyses due to equipment

problems and incompatibilities (n=3), responding with the wrong button presses (n=1), and

"excessive eye watering" during the task which was reported to be "very distracting" and

resulted in at-chance performance (n=1). The group size reported below is therefore n=35, 19

female, age=22.9±2.7.

As above, statistics were conducted both with and without outliers. Replacing outlier

values with median values had no effect on test statistics and so all analyses below include

outliers. Performance was very similar to the above experiments (Figure 2, Experiment 3).

Participants d' scores differed significantly from 0 according to one-sample t-testing for both

increases and decreases in duration ($t(34)=13.9$, $p_{FDR}<.001$, 95% CI [1.35, 1.81]; $t(34)=16.4$,

$p_{FDR}<.001$, 95% CI [1.32, 1.69], respectively). In addition, and similarly to the results of

experiment 1 but not experiment 2, no difference was detected between sensitivity to changes in

increases versus decreases according to two-sample t-testing ($t(34)=0.65$, $p_{FDR}=.52$, 95% CI [-

.16, .31]).

7.2   FMRI Results - Encoding

As no effect of Lag, Duration, or an interaction thereof was detected in behavioral performance (Section 3) and participants performed equally well regardless of increasing or decreasing the Lure duration (Section 7.1), responses were collapsed across Lag and Duration, and further, types of Misses, Correct Rejections, and False Alarms (Table 1) were collapsed as well. Collapsing resulted in 28 Hits, 31 Misses, 31 Correct Rejections, and 23 False Alarms, on average.

The effect of encoding on task performance was assessed by investigating the BOLD response to stimulus presentation that preceded a task response (Hit, CR, etc.). For the *a priori* ROIs, no effect was determined via a two-factor within-subject MANOVA for either ROI, Behavior, or an interaction thereof (all p-values > .05 once correcting for sphericity via the Greenhouse-Geisser method) for both the anterior and posterior regions of the hippocampus.

An exploratory whole-brain analysis also failed to detect any clusters which showed differential signal during trials preceding task responses (Trials preceding Hit, FA, CR, Miss) when using the thresholding criteria of cluster size k = 20, NN = 1, two-sided comparison, p < .001, FWE = .05. A small-volume correction, using masks corresponding to the MTL (hippocampus, entorhinal, and parahippocampal cortex) did, however, reveal two clusters with differential activity using the thresholding criteria of k = 6, NN = 1, two-sided comparison, p < .001, FWE = .05. Neuroanatomic classification of the clusters for these and subsequent analyses were determined by the criteria established by Frankó et al. (2014). The left entorhinal cortex was more active during encoding trials preceding a Hit versus a Miss (LEC, Figure 3 Left, Table 2) while the right hippocampus was more active during encoding trials preceding a FA than a CR (RHC, Figure 3 Middle, Table 2).

440
441 **Figure 3. Regions engaged in duration detection.** Left and Middle: left entorhinal cortex
442 (LEC) and right hippocampus (RHC) are differentially engaged during encoding trials preceding
443 task performance. Right: Left perirhinal cortex (LPRC) is differentially involved in Target
444 detection. "Tp" = trial preceding a test response.

445 Table 2

Phase	Cluster	K	X	Y	Z	T(34)	Sig	LB	UB
Encoding	LEC	9	-16	-13	-25	4.13	***	.21	.62
	RHC	7	27	-25	-9	-4.55	***	-.81	-.31
Retrieval	LPRC	7	-18	-23	-25	-3.15	**	-.61	-.13

446 Cluster descriptions of small-volume corrected analyses. K = cluster size, X-Z = peak MNI
447 coordinate. T(34) = paired t-test with 34 df, LB UB = lower and upper bound of 95% confidence
448 interval. LEC = left entorhinal cortex, RHC = right hippocampus, LPRC = left perirhinal cortex.
449 *** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$.

 7.3   FMRI Results – Retrieval

To investigate processes associated with task performance the HRF was modeled for the

time in which participants responded to Target and Lure stimuli. *A priori* investigations into the

subregions of the medial temporal lobe failed to detect a significant interaction between region

and behavior in either portion of the hippocampus. Correspondingly, an exploratory whole-brain

analysis using the same thresholding criteria as was reported above failed to detect any clusters

that demonstrated differential activity for the various task behaviors. A small-volume correction,

however, detected a cluster in the left perirhinal cortex that was differentially engaged in correct

responses (LPRC, Figure 3 Right, Table 2). That is, this cluster was more active during the

correct identification of Targets (Hits) than during the correct identification of Lures (CRs).

8   DISCUSSION

This set of experiments investigated whether mnemonic discrimination was possible for

stimulus duration and identified functional neuroanatomic correlates thereof. The task (Figure 1)

involved serially presenting images of everyday items in a continuous-recognition paradigm for

either 1 or 1.5 seconds. Following the first presentation of a stimulus the participants performed

an orienting task wherein they made decisions from memory about physical properties of the

stimulus. If a stimulus repeated, it was either presented for the same duration (Targets) or for a

difference of 0.5 seconds (Lures); in these cases, the participants were explicitly instructed to

attend the presentation duration and subsequently tasked with deciding whether a change of

stimulus duration occurred. Such a small change in stimulus duration was intentionally selected

in order to elicit a sufficient number of Misses and FAs for functional BOLD analyses. The

paradigm was conducted three times in naïve groups of participants, experiments 2 and 3 serving

to replicate the behavioral findings of experiment 1 and bringing the total number of participants

that performed the task to n=69.

These experiments had several findings. First, behavioral evidence indicated that

participants were successful at remembering and detecting changes of stimulus duration on the

order of 0.5 seconds and that they were equally sensitive regardless of the direction of duration

change (3   RESULTS – Behavioral Experiment 1). With respect to these behavioral findings,

we reject the null of hypothesis (a), given that participants had d' scores which differed

significantly from zero, but fail to reject the null of hypotheses (b) and (c); participants were

equally sensitive at Lag 4 as at Lag 12 and were equally sensitive to increases and decreases in

duration. These subsecond findings replicate those of Palombo et al. (2019), in which amnestic

patients were tasked detecting whether test spinwheels spun for a different duration than study

pinwheels. Palombo et al. (2019) noted, as we do here, that participants had strong d' scores and

were sensitive to both increases and decreases in duration. Further, in the present experiment, no

effect of lag was detected; equal performance at either lag suggests that the distracting task was

sufficiently difficult to overwhelm working memory such that behavioral results here are

reflective of episodic memory processes. Were this not the case, we would expect to see an

interaction between d' scores and lag due to Lag 4 performance being governed more by short-

term memory and Lag 12 by episodic. Corresponding with this line of reasoning, the Palombo et

al. (2019) experiment, who tested participants within the domain of short-term memory,

presented d' scores that where two standard deviations higher than those presented here. Finally,

the behavioral evidence suggests that the detected effect is robust as the d' scores were stable

across three different groups of participants.

Second, two clusters showed differential activation during the encoding of the stimuli

which was predictive of subsequent test performance. A cluster in the right hippocampus (Figure

3, middle) was differentially engaged in encoding such that the cluster was more active

preceding the incorrect detection of Lures (FA) compared to correct detection (CR). This pattern

of activity is consistent with the deleterious effect that the default mode network has on

subsequent test performance; we interpret this cluster as being indicative of participants failing to

attend the training stimulus such that subsequent performance was adversely affected (H. Kim,

2011). It should be noted, though, that a second *a posteriori* whole-brain analysis did not identify

any additional clusters to those detected in the small-volume correction. As such, the lack of

additional default-mode findings weakens the interpretation of this hippocampal cluster.

Next, the left medial entorhinal cortex (mEC) demonstrated differential activity which

predicted subsequent Target-trial performance, in that the cluster was more active preceding a

Hit relative to preceding a Miss (Figure 3, left). This cluster appears to be critically involved in

the encoding the temporal properties of the stimuli, as visual information remained identical

between study and test, a finding that is consistent with the previous literature: numerous studies

have detected cells with a selectivity for temporal information within the mEC. For instance,

Kraus et al. (2015) demonstrated mEC grid cell activity which signaled for elapsed time in

addition to distance traveled, showing an integration of time and distance, and Heys and

Dombeck (2018) demonstrated both that while the mEC is sensitive to elapsed time, it can also

remap its sensitivity according to contextual task demands (also, see Sugar & Moser, 2019).

Robinson et al. (2017) showed that the mEC helps support the hippocampal CA1 representation

of time, and further, Suh et al. (2011) demonstrated that the monosynaptic side of the perforant

pathway, the connection between the mEC and CA1, is integral for temporal associations. This

hippocampal structure, the CA1, is downstream from the mEC and has been strongly implicated

in the temporal aspects of memory (Allen et al., 2016; Cai et al., 2016; Dimsdale-Zucker et al.,

2018; MacDonald et al., 2011; Mankin et al., 2012; Salz et al., 2016; Suh et al., 2011; Y. Wang

et al., 2015). Finally, inactivation of the mEC is also associated with disruptions in temporal

processing (Heys & Dombeck, 2018; Robinson et al., 2017; Sugar & Moser, 2019). As such, the

mEC is proposed to bind information of different modalities (i.e. item, spatial, temporal) as well

as providing a scaffold of spatiotemporal information to the hippocampus (Sugar & Moser,

2019).

Further, Maass et al. (2015) and Schröder et al. (2015) demonstrate that the mediolateral

divisions of the rodent entorhinal cortex do not translate to the human entorhinal cortex, but that

the human entorhinal cortex is functionally divided along an anterolateral-posteromedial axis

such that the human homologue of the rodent mEC is the posteromedial entorhinal cortex

(pmEC). Maass et al. (2015) shows the PHC is functionally coupled with the pmEC, implicating

this region in processing contextual information as opposed to item information which tends to

be sent from the PRC to the lateral anterior EC (Aminoff et al., 2007; Diana et al., 2013; Hsieh et

al., 2014; Jenkins & Ranganath, 2010; Naya et al., 2017; F. Wang & Diana, 2017). Critically, the

cluster detected in this experiment during the encoding phase of the experiment entirely

corresponds with the pmEC. Further still, Schröder et al. (2015) demonstrated that pmEC forms

part of the posterior-medial system, a system which carries spatial information. The rodent and

human literature in conjunction therefore implicate the pmEC in processing not just spatial but

contextual information which varies in a dimension (i.e. temporal information) according to task

demands, a notion that is reminiscent of Salz et al. (2016), who noted that temporal processing in

the hippocampus mirrors that of spatial. In the current experiment, then, the detected pmEC

cluster is believed to be processing the temporal context information associated with each item.

Third, a cluster within the left perirhinal cortex (PRC) was differentially engaged during

the test phase such that it was more active during Hits than Correct Rejections (Figure 3, right).

Similarly, recent work implicated the PRC in processing temporal information during the test

phase of an experiment: Montchal et al. (2019) had participants first view a television episode

and then tested participants by having them place still-frames from the episode on a timeline, a

task designed to test memory for temporal order. While the paper emphasized the roles of the

anterior-lateral EC and subregions of the HC, Montchal et al. (2019) nevertheless demonstrated

that the PRC was differentially engaged in high versus low accuracy for temporal information. In

a separate but related vein, the Binding of Item and Context theory (Diana et al., 2013) has

proposed a functional dissociation in the medial temporal lobe where the parahippocampus

processes contextual information, the PRC item information, and the hippocampus serving to

bind together item and context; the role of the PRC in such a model has recently been supported

(Diana et al., 2013; Hsieh et al., 2014; F. Wang & Diana, 2017). Together then, the PRC has

been implicated in processing both temporal and item information. Such a conjunction of item

and time is supported by F. Wang et al. (2017), who noted PRC activation associated with the

retrieval of contextual temporal information, perhaps due to the 'unitization' of the item and

context (Ford et al., 2010; Giovanello et al., 2006). More explicitly, work using single-unit

recordings in non-human primates demonstrated that PRC cells fired for both item and temporal

information (Naya et al., 2017). Thus, the PRC activation detected in this experiment is

consistent with the conjunction of item-temporal information processing, in which the PRC

differentially aides in the successful retrieval of item and temporal duration information. Indeed,

increased signal from this region is associated with Hits, i.e., correctly retrieving the duration

information (as the visual information was identical), while suppressed signal is associated with

a mismatch detection between the Lure duration and that of the original.

A number of limitations exist for this experiment. First, while only Targets (same

duration) and Lures (different duration) were tested in this experiment, participants had three

response options necessitating an adjustment to the d' calculations. This adjustment resulted in

collapsing across some response types such that these adjusted-d' scores do not represent a bias-

corrected deflection point but rather indicate sensitivity to whether a change occurred. Indeed, in

calculating $d'_{1.5s}$ (when the Target was 1.5s and the Lure was 1s), *pHit* combined both responses

that did not involve a "shorter" judgment for Targets, and *pFA* did the same. With such a

calculation, a higher adjusted-d' score therefore indicates that a participant is less likely to

respond "shorter" on longer Target trials and more likely to respond the same on Lure trials, a

response pattern that is related to, but separate from, accuracy in judging stimulus duration in

episodic memory. Second, and related, several response categories were collapsed across in the

functional analyses: as no main effect of Lag or Duration was detected, the same responses from

different stimulus types (such as Hit_{Sa} for both a 1.5s and 1s Target for both Lags) were

combined into the same bin. This method ensured a proper number of trials per behavioral bin

existed such that the shape of the hemodynamic response function could reasonably be modeled,

but it nevertheless may have contributed noise to the analyses. Indeed, if certain regions of tissue

were involved in only detecting increases, decreases, or no change in stimulus duration then such

a combination would likely have introduced unnecessary noise to any existing signal. As such,

our functional findings do not illustrate signal associated with correctly identifying increases or

decreases of duration in Targets and Lures, but rather demonstrate signal associated with

detecting temporal change between the study and test stimuli. Third, while the hippocampal

subregion CA1 has been shown to be critically involved in temporal processing for memory

tasks (Allen et al., 2016; Cai et al., 2016; Dimsdale-Zucker et al., 2018; MacDonald et al., 2011;

Mankin et al., 2012; Montchal et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2017; Salz et al., 2016; Y. Wang et

al., 2015), our results did not replicate these findings. This is likely due to the fact that the rodent

studies which have implicated the CA1 have largely involved requiring the rodent to maintain

information over time (e.g., Kraus et al., 2015; Pastalkova et al., 2008), information which is not

necessarily temporal and is commonly a previous decision. Our experiment instead involved the

retrieval of temporal duration information, and likewise it is unsurprising that we detected signal

associated with tissue in a different region. With respect to previous studies involving humans

(Aminoff et al., 2007; Clewett & Davachi, 2017; Diana et al., 2013; El-Kalliny et al., 2019;

Hsieh et al., 2014; Jenkins & Ranganath, 2010, 2016; Montchal et al., 2019; F. Wang & Diana,

2017), our results are similar in nature and any differences are likely due to the fact the we here

tested for episodic memory of temporal duration rather than temporal order or sequence, or

working memory for temporal duration (Palombo et al., 2019). As such, we partially reject

hypothesis (d), as we did find differential activation in the MTL associated with the task, but not

in the hypothesized region of CA1. Further, we reject hypothesis (e), as no differential signal was

detected in the anterior versus posterior HC. It is possible that we failed to detect differential

signal in these regions due to collapsing across too much variance, or that the selected contrasts

did not reflect differences in the signal, or perhaps even due to the explicit nature of our task.

Either way, one must take caution in interpreting null results (Chen et al., 2017) and note that we

were unable to falsify these hypotheses.

In summary, we presented participants with stimuli of different duration and tasked them

with detecting a change in duration. We found that participants were sensitive on the order of 0.5

seconds, a finding which was demonstrated in three different groups of participants. We also

demonstrate that the left posteromedial entorhinal cortex is differentially involved during the

encoding of items such that greater activity in this region is predictive of subsequent Hit versus

subsequent Miss. Finally, the left perirhinal cortex was noted to be differentially engaged during

successful test performance, being more active during Hits than Correct Rejections, activation

which is consistent with previous work demonstrating that this region is sensitive to the

conjugation of item and temporal context.

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