

Post-memory

Memory, as defined by the American Psychological Association, is “the ability to retain information or a representation of past experience, based on the mental processes of learning or encoding, retention across some interval of time, and retrieval or reactivation of the memory.”¹ Whether triggered by sounds, smells, or other random stimuli, memories are an integral link between our past experiences and our present reality as they allow us to revisit important times in our lives. But is it possible to remember the lived experiences of others as if they were our own memories?

The concept of ‘post-memory’, developed by Marianne Hirsch, describes this phenomenon. Hirsch defines post-memory as “the relationship the ‘generation after’ has to the personal, collective and cultural trauma of those who came before.”² These memories being transmitted through photographs, written records, and storytelling. In examining the impact of the Holocaust and the stories and experiences conveyed to the “generation after,” Hirsch found that the memories of Holocaust survivors were passed onto their descendants and were “transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to seem to constitute memories in their own right.”³ Hirsch’s ideas are complemented by the concepts of “collective trauma” and “collective memory” where tragedies leave lasting impacts on the psyche of a group for generations to come.⁴

The acknowledgement of post memory opens a space for the “generation after” to collectively remember and process the events of their ancestors. Pulvermacher’s *The Archive* is a performance work situated within this post memory framework. Pulvermacher’s performance,

¹ APA Dictionary of Psychology, s.v. “Memory,” American Psychological Association, last modified April 19, 2018, <https://dictionary.apa.org/memory>.

² “An Interview with Marianne Hirsch.” Columbia University Press. Accessed February 18, 2026. <https://cup.columbia.edu/author-interviews/hirsch-generation-postmemory/>.

³ “An Interview with Marianne Hirsch.” Columbia University Press. Accessed February 18, 2026. <https://cup.columbia.edu/author-interviews/hirsch-generation-postmemory/>.

⁴ Gilad Hirschberger, “Collective Trauma and the Social Construction of Meaning,” *Frontiers*, March 1, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01441>.

drawing on the memories and lived experiences of her ancestors, preserves them and their legacies.

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