

## Psychology Exam Questions

### 1. Explain what is meant by the terms, 'Flashbulb memory', 'Repression' and 'Reconstructive Memory' (2+2+2)

Flashbulb Memories are when people have a particularly strong and often-detailed memory of where they were and what they were doing when a particular event occurred. This event could be a well-known event in the newspaper such as when Princess Diana died or it could be more personal event, which is memorable to that particular individual such as their wedding day or the death of a relative.

Repression is the concept, which was introduced by Freud who suggested that we forget, because there is great anxiety associated with certain memories, which is too great to cope with. When this is the case we may use the unconscious defense mechanism of Repression to push out memories into the unconscious. These memories continue to exist but out of the conscious memory. For example memories of been abused as a child may be to disturbing for a person to cope with and may be out of conscious recall.

Bartlett (1932) argued that Reconstructive Memory is when we store memories in terms of our past knowledge and experience (schemas). A schema is a way of summarizing events, which enables us to predict what will happen in certain situations. For example if you were asked what your schema of 'getting on the bus' involved you would probably include:

Getting on the bus; stating your destination; paying the fare and finally sitting down.

### 2. Outline two factors that might influence the accuracy of Eyewitness Testimony (3+3)

The two factors that could influence the accuracy of eyewitness testimony are, leading questions and face recognition.

Loftus et al has suggested that the accuracy of the recall by a person can be affected by asking leading questions, which imply that a certain answer is expected can significantly affect a persons testimony. Loftus and Zanni (1975) showed participants had a film of a car accident. They found that more participants recalled (incorrectly) seeing a broken headlight if they were asked '*did you see the broken headlight*' than '*did you see a broken headlight*'. It can be concluded that leading questions not only affect recall of material, but also can actually change information that has previously been stored in the memory.

Face recognition is when witnesses are called upon to describe some of the people involved in these events. Shapiro and Penrod (1986) found that subjects asked to make judgments about a face rather than just looking at it showed more accurate recall later on. Research shows that more familiar and distinctive faces are remembered better after long delays. Davis and Jenkins found that the accuracy of face recognition is significantly reduced if subjects are shown composite photo-fit pictures of other faces beforehand.

Gorenstein and Ellsworth (1980) found that witnesses are more likely to identify (correctly or otherwise) a person from a line up if they had appeared in mug shots the witness had searched beforehand. It can be concluded that the witness of an event would have to have a good look at the criminal to remember the distinctive features, because if there is any incorrect information then the wrong person may be falsely accused.

3. The Multi-Store model proposed by Atkinson and Shiffrin has been very influential, but it has also been criticised for its over simplicity and lack of flexibility.

To what extent does psychological research support the Multi-Store model as an adequate explanation of human memory? (18)

There is additional research that shows that there are two main lines of evidence that support the model's assumptions about the way information flows through the system and the existence of STM and LTM. These are the Free Recall Experiments and the studies of brain damaged patients.

In the Free Recall experiments, participants are given a number of words to remember to test whether they can recall them accurately. The results usually fall into a pattern known as the serial position curve. This curve consists of a primary effect, which means that the participants tend to recall the words of the list well, which indicates that this involved recall from long-term memory. An Asymptote which indicates that middle portion items of the list are remembered far less well than those at the beginning and at the end, and a recency effect which means that participants recall items from the end of the list and are more likely to get these right than all the earlier items. Further evidence for the primary and recency effect comes from the findings that slower rates of representation can improve the primacy effect possibly due to the increase in rehearsal time, but this has little or no effect on the recency effect. The recency effect disappears if the last words are not recalled straight away and this is supported by Glanzer and Cunitz (1966) research, which involved giving subjects an interference task immediately after the last word of the list and found a primacy but no recency effect.

The studies of brain damaged patients included cases of anterograde amnesia such as H.M (Milner et al, 1978) or Clive Wearing provide strong evidence for the distinction between STM and LTM. Anterograde amnesia is often caused by brain damage to the hippocampus and those suffering from it are incapable of transferring new information between STM and LTM. They attract in a world of experience that only lasts as long as their STM does. They often retain a large amount of LTM for events up until the point of brain damage and maintain their procedural memories. Despite the fact that they are incapable of gaining new long-term declarative memory for semantic or episodic information, most are able to learn new procedural skills. Research by Baddeley and Warrington (1970) shows that if these people are given free recall experiments they show good recency effects, but poor primacy effects.

This research provides support for the Atkinson and Shiffrin Model of Memory and proves that to a certain extent it is a reliable model. However there are many criticisms of

this model, which cause it to become a less accurate in terms of explaining human memory and the way information passes through the stores.