

Discuss emotions factors of forgetting

Repression is a defense mechanism which blocks out emotional aroused memories and these memories because inaccessible because they are motivated by that person and placed in the unconscious mind. Examples of memories which might be repressed are child abuse or rape. This theory was based on the ideas of Freud, whose theories have now been heavily criticized. The implication of this is that such memories could be retrieved accidentally.

Freud's 1901 case study supports repression as he found that a man kept forgetting what followed the line, 'with a white sheet'. This indicates that he was repressing the fear of death as he associated the white sheet with the linen sheet that is placed over a corpse. Freud used questions to find out this information from the man. It could be a case of false memory syndrome where an existing memory is confused and someone else has put ideas (i.e. the psychologist) in to the patient's head. This doesn't support repression. All the theories that support the study are subjective; this means that it is open to individual interpretation. It is therefore very difficult to prove whether someone has repressed something or not. Furthermore you cannot generalize the idea.

Levinger and Clark's experiment supports Freud's repression theory as the study showed that participants took longer to respond to negatively charged words compared with those for neutral words. This supports the repression theory as the repression theory states that certain memories are pushed into our unconscious mind through motivation when they create negative emotions. This would explain why it took participants longer to respond to the negatively charged words as thoughts associated with words would have been pushed out into the unconscious memory. This experiment was done on a large sample. However there are criticisms of this experiment, it is also based on subjective measures like Freud's studies. It may have been conducted in a laboratory but the theory it was testing was based on one person's research into one case. The results have been interperated by the people who conducted the experiment. Parkin et al. (1982) did a variation on the original experiment but added a delay. He found that some of the words were still remembered so the words could not have been repressed as the participants were able to recall them. This experiment did not support the repression theory.

Flashbulb memory is when emotional aroused memories are recalled easily where significant details are remembered clearly. This contradicts repression because it suggests that the emotionally aroused memory is remembered more clearly whereas repression suggests that memories are blocked out and not remembered. However we can ask how accurate is a flashbulb memory?

Brown and Kulik 1977 analyzed people's recall of national events. They found out that people remembered details of what was going on when they found out an incident such as Princess Diana's death. Memories for such events were particularly vivid, detailed and long lasting. People usually remembered where they were when they heard the news, how they heard it, what they and others were doing at the time, and the emotional impact of the news on themselves and those around them. They concluded that flashbulb memories are special and quite different from other memories. They allow people to remember minor details of an event that they would otherwise forget. Flashbulb memories

are sometimes quite inaccurate. People who tend to forget these small details or make minor errors, are suggested that the event was not as personally important to them as it was to other people. Flashbulb memories provide a good explanation on how great details of some days can be remembered, whereas details of the next cannot.