Role of Emotional Factors in Forgetting

- Emotion often ignored.
- However, likely that how one feels has impact.
- Some evidence that memory is better for material that fits one’s mood.
- I.e., depressed people recall more unhappy memories than non-depressed people.
- Clark & Teasdale (1982) found that people whose depression fluctuated throughout 24hr cycle were less likely to recall happy memories during their most depressed periods than during their neutral periods.
Flashbulb Memories

• Influenced by emotion.
• Vivid.
• Detailed.
• Long lasting.
• Momentous event.
• Unexpected event.
• Highly significant.
• Highly emotional.

Flashbulb Memories

• May be personal
• May be worldwide.
• Assassination of President Kennedy, 1963.
• Death of Princess Diana, 1997.
• 9/11

Activity Pg 25

• Write your answers here.
Brown & Kulik (1977)

- First to describe memories as flashbulb.
- Event must be surprising and have real consequence.
- Thought emotion triggered neural mechanism that imprints event onto memory.
- Special because of detail and accuracy.

Brown & Kulik (1977)

- Found 6 kinds of information were recalled:
  - Where
  - What
  - Media
  - Own response
  - Others response
  - Aftermath

Research on Flashbulb Memories

- 86% British students compared to 29 non-British students had vivid and accurate memories of resignation of Margaret Thatcher.
- (even after 11 months)
- Claims this as flashbulb as meets B & K criteria.
In contrast Neisser (1982)

- It is argued that not Flashbulb but is result of many and frequent rehearsals.
- Explains uniformity of memory as caused by conventions of story telling.
- Also argues subject to inaccuracy and forgetting as ordinary memories, thus are products of ordinary memory mechanisms.
  - See Key Study (McCloskey 1988) pg 26

More evidence

- Neisser was certain baseball game was on radio when he heard about Pearl Harbour.
- Weaver (1993) concurs as found college students had no more vivid memories of the decision to bomb Iraq than of a meeting a friend.
- Conway (1995) counters that bombing of Iraq not Flashbulb as does NOT meet criteria (was expected).
- Thus evidence is mixed.

Repression

- Freud (1915) repression is unconscious process which ensures upsetting memories are kept from conscious.
- Used patients with neurotic disorders as examples.
- Difficult to prove existence of repression.
  - See Key Study (Levinger & Clark 1981) pg 27.
- But some evidence to show painful experiences are more easily forgotten than pleasurable ones.
Memory for Pain

• Women’s ratings of pain during childbirth lessened after 3 months, indicating the memory had faded considerably during that time (Robinson et al 1980).

• BUT it was found that ratings of pain during sampling of spinal fluid did not decline over time (Hunter et al 1979).

Recovered Memories

• Research recently focused on repressed memories of sexual abuse.

• Highly controversial as memories recovered through psychotherapy can be distressing and result in prosecution.

• Additionally there is often question of reality of memories.
  – Often no collaborative evidence.

• No doubt memories of abuse may be repressed as Williams (1992) found 38% of African-American women, who were known to have been abused, had repressed memories of it.

• However, some of these were found to be false memories.

• Loftus (1997) found even healthy individuals could be made to alter their memories after false suggestions.

• See Baddeley pg 143
Check your Understanding:

• Do 1 – 10 pg 28 for quick test next lesson.

• Read 'Eye on the Exam' pg 29.

• Do 1 – 5 Revision Summary and fill any gaps.