

Memory
Forgetting and Misremembering

Misremembering by Psychologists

- Fredrick Bartlett
 - Opening of Cambridge University experimental lab
- Ulrich Neisser
 - Announcement of Pearl Harbor bombing
- Jean Piaget
 - Memory of thwarted kidnapping

Source Amnesia

- Retrieving an accurate memory but attributing the memory to the wrong source
- During encoding, different aspects of the memory are distributed to different parts of the brain
 - Source memory is especially frail
- Pool & Lindsay (1995)
 - Source amnesia in preschool children

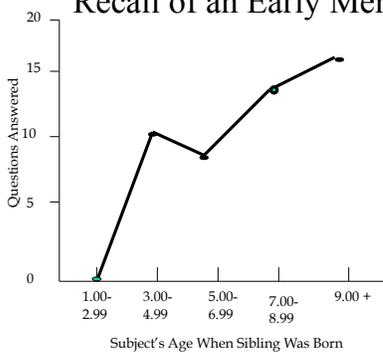
More Source Amnesia

- President Reagan
 - Fiction remembered as fact
- Australian psychologist Donald Thompson
 - Brought in for questioning in a rape case
 - Airtight alibi
 - Being interviewed on live television

Childhood Amnesia

- Passage of Time
- Repression of sexual and aggressive feelings
- Biological maturity of the brain
- Development of language and schooling
- Schemas and categories

Recall of an Early Memory



Repressed Memory Controversy

- Media flooded with reports of recovered memories of childhood abuse
- Are the accusations justified?
- Is it possible to forget abuse only to recover those memories years later?

Arguments for Repressed Memories

- Common for patients to bury traumatic incidents in their unconscious
- Childhood sexual abuse is a widespread problem
- Attribute upsurge in reports of abuse to increased sensitivity to the possibility of repressed memories

Arguments against Repressed Memories

- Suggestible patients convinced of abuse by therapists
 - Therapists working under assumption that all psychological problems result from sexual abuse
- Techniques used to “recover” repressed memories have been shown to lead to false memories

Psychological Research

- Roediger & McDermott (1995)
 - semantic associates
- Smith, Ward, Tindell, Sifonis & Wilkenfeld, M. J. (2000)
 - Graded category structure
- Loftus and colleagues (1996)
 - Lost in a Mall

Elizabeth Loftus

- VERY active research scientist
 - Investigating memory in real-life settings
- Had her own “recovered” memory experience
- Fights so avidly so that true child abuse cases do not become trivialized or disbelieved