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Psychology 141: The Psychology of Memory Imperfections, Injustices, and Improvements Prof. J Frydman

Introduction

Emotions can affect our short-term memory (Levine & Burgess, 1997). We posit that the emotions that may have the most effect are happiness and sadness. Happiness and sadness have the most effect on our brains because they are the emotions that we feel most frequently. We conducted a study to test our hypothesis and to discern how these emotions affect our short-term memory. This poster will describe the way in which we collected our research, the results of the surveys conducted, and the results of this project.

Hypothesis:

While sadness hinders our ability to retain specific information, happiness can help improve our memory.

General Research

Short-term memory lasts about a total of 15 to 30 seconds (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1997).

Short-term memory has a limited duration and is malleable, and information can easily be lost with distractions (McLeod, 2009).

Research shows that emotions can have an effect on your memory. People who are in a positive mood are more likely to remember information presented to them, whereas people who are in a negative mood (i.e. sad or angry) are less likely to remember the information that is presented to them (Levine & Burgess, 1997).

Foundational Source:

Students were randomly assigned a letter grade, either an 'A' or a 'D' to invoke a specific emotion from them. The students who received an 'A' were in a happy mood, and those who received the 'D' were in a sad mood. Then they were given a narrative to remember and were then tested on how much they remembered. The group that was in the happy mood group remembered more of the narrative than the students in the sad group (Levine & Burgess, 1997). This experiment influenced us to want to conduct our own experiment in how emotion can affect memory.

Materials & Methods

Methods

In order to test our theory, we randomly gathered three groups of five subjects. The groups were shown a list of 10 words relating to New York Cy, and after 20 seconds we removed the list from their sight. One group was shown a happy video lasting two and a half minutes, the second group was shown a sad video of equal length, and the third group was a control group. After the video was over, each subject was asked to write down the words that they were able to remember.

Materials

- One happy video and one sad video
- Participants (18-25 years of age)

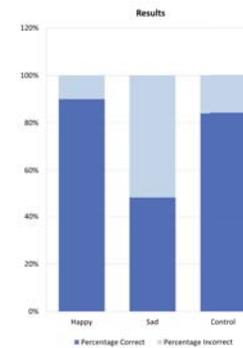
Happy Video	Sad Video	Control Group
- 3 Male	- 1 Male	- 3 Male
- 2 Female	- 4 Female	- 2 Female

List of words used:

- Manhattan
- Subway
- Taxis
- Food
- Time Square
- ferry
- buildings
- crowd
- city
- Broadway

Findings

Participants	Words remembered (Happy Video)	Words remembered (Sad Video)	Words remembered (control group)
1	9/10	7/:0	8/10
2	10/10	4/:0	10/10
3	9/10	5/:0	9/10
4	9/10	4/:0	8/10
5	8/10	4/:0	7/10



Results

Our study was effective in proving that emotions can interfere with short-term memory. The control group proved to remember 84% of the words shown to them. The subjects watching the happy video remembered 90% of the words shown to them, leaving the subjects watching the sad video remembering only 48% of the words shown to them. The subjects watching the sad video were also recorded repeating words multiple times and even writing down words that were not shown to them, more so than any other group.

References

- Atkinson, R. C., & Shiffrin, R. M. (1997). The control process of short-term memory. *Scientific American*, 225, 82-90.
- Levine, L. J., & Burgess, S. L. (1997). Beyond general arousal: Effects of specific emotions on memory. *Social Cognition*, 15(3), 157-181.
- McLeod, S.A. (2009). Short Term memory. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/short-term-memory.html