2.7 Eyewitness Testimony: The Effect of Anxiety on Recall: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 20 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Describe the 'weapon focus' effect as it applies to eyewitness testimony in a criminological context.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 A witness, Erin, sees a purse snatching in a busy street while texting and glances up to see the thief holding a handbag but no weapon. She felt calm at the time. Would you predict her identification accuracy of the thief to be impaired or enhanced by anxiety? Justify your answer with reference to the research and theory above.

(Total for Question 2 is 6 marks)

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3 Outline the main finding of Christianson and Hubinette's 1993 study of real bank robbery witnesses regarding anxiety and recall.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.7 Eyewitness Testimony: The Effect of Anxiety on Recall: Test Pack

Question 1

states that weapon focus is the tendency for a witness to focus attention on a weapon present during a crime oe	**B1**
states that attention to the weapon reduces attention to other details, such as the perpetrator's face oe	**B1**
explains that the effect reduces accuracy of peripheral recall, such as identity or clothing oe	**B1**
may mention that the effect is linked to anxiety or high arousal in the witness oe	**B1**

Answer: Weapon focus is when a witness concentrates on a weapon present during a crime, reducing attention to other details like the perpetrator's face and so lowering accuracy for peripheral information; it is linked to high arousal or anxiety.

Question 2

identifies Erin's arousal/anxiety level as low or calm during the event oe	**M1**
applies inverted-U theory: low arousal predicts weaker attention and thus poorer recall compared with moderate arousal oe	**A1**
refers to weapon focus or tunnel vision as reducing accuracy only when arousal is high and a weapon is present, which does not apply here oe	**M1**
concludes that identification is likely to be not enhanced, possibly impaired, because arousal was low and attention was on the phone prior to looking up oe	**A1**
supports the conclusion with a named study or theory, e.g. contrasts with Yuille and Cutshall field results where higher arousal enhanced recall, showing context matters oe	**B1**
an alternative valid conclusion that Erin might still be accurate if other supporting factors exist, such as close proximity or multiple views, is creditable oe	**B1**

Answer: Erin was calm, so under the inverted-U account her low arousal may reduce attentional focus and lead to poorer identification than if she had moderate arousal; weapon focus explanations do not apply because no weapon was present, though proximity and viewing opportunity could still support accurate ID in some cases.

Question 3

states the context: interviews with victims and witnesses of real bank robberies in Sweden oe	**M1**
reports that those who were most emotionally aroused during the robberies had better recall of central and peripheral details than less aroused witnesses oe	**A1**
notes that field evidence suggested arousal did not always impair memory and could enhance accuracy oe	**A1**
may mention that the study contrasted with some lab-based weapon focus findings oe	**B1**

Answer: Christianson and Hubinette (1993) found that victims of real bank robberies who were most emotionally aroused had better recall of both central and peripheral details, suggesting anxiety can enhance memory in real events.

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