**Questions to Consider**

Chapter 5: Memory Structures and Processes

* **Is memory a process, a structure, or a system?**

Memory has been thought of as both a process and a structure. Researchers have viewed memory in terms of processes (encoding, storage, and retrieval), structural storage units (sensory, short-term, and long-term memory), and systems (working-memory system with multiple subsystems).

* **How many different types of memory are there?**

There is no clear answer to this question, as it is unclear which types of memory are distinct from other types. However, researchers have attempted to identify several different types of memory: memory based on duration (short-term vs. long-term mem­ory), memory based on content (episodic, semantic, and procedural memory), memory based on retrieval task (recall and recognition), memory based on ref­erence to the self (autobiographical memory), mem­ory based on vivid details and emotional context (flashbulb memory), memory based on intentional­ity of retrieval (explicit vs. implicit memory), and memory for future tasks (prospective memory).

* **Are there differences in the ways we store and retrieve memories based on how old the memories are?**

Yes. There are important differences in memories we store for the short term and memories stored over the long term. The main distinction between these types of memories is the duration of storage: less than a minute for short-term memories and a lifetime for long-term memories. In addition, short-term memo­ries seem to be coded primarily with verbal codes, and long-term memories seem to be coded primarily with semantic codes. Finally, the capacity of short-term memory seems to be limited (about five to nine chunks of information), whereas long-term memory seems to have an unlimited capacity.

* **What kind of memory helps us to focus on a task?**

Working memory involves information about a task currently in our focus of attention. Thus, it aids in the completion of tasks we are currently attending to, while also helping us keep track of other things in our environment and ignore things that are irrelevant.

* **How does our memory influence us unintentionally?**

Implicit-memory retrieval involves unintentional retrieval of information. Implicit memory can be based on episodes (such as a study list) or procedures (such as a skill like driving a car).

* **What are the limits of our memory?**

In some cases, the limits of memory are based on our limits of attention in terms of what we can encode effectively and focus on for appropriate cues for retrieval. Over the short term, our attention limits influence what we can focus on in working memory (or store in STM). Over the long term, we seem to be able to store unlimited amounts of information, but we are limited in what we can retrieve at any given time.