Christianson & Hubinette (1993)

*Methods:* Questioned real witnesses to genuine bank robberies. Some participants had been onlookers, whereas others had actually been physically threatened by the robbers.  
*Results:* They found that the victims, people who would have been in more danger, and thus more anxious, were more accurate in their recall than the bystanders. They remembered more details about the robbers’ clothing, their behaviour and the weapon, and this detail was more accurate than that supplied by bystanders. Furthermore, this superior recall continued to be evident 15 months later, when questioned again.  
*Conclusions:* The researchers concluded that people are better at recall in highly stressful events. They also concluded that recall was better in real life, in comparison to previous research undertaken in the artificial environment of the laboratory.

Yuille and Cutshall (1986)

*Methods*: Yuille & Cutshall (1986) interviewed 13 witnesses to a real life shooting involving a shop owner and an armed thief. The shop owner was wounded, but survived and the thief was shot dead. Some witnesses had been close to the incident, whereas others had seen it from a distance.

*Results:* They found that all witnesses gave extremely accurate accounts several months after the event. Those who had been physically closest provided the most detail and misleading questions had no impact on the accuracy of recall. Those who had been most distressed at the time of the shooting were the most accurate 5 months later.

*Conclusions:* They showed that witnesses of a real life incident (a gun shooting outside a gun shop in Canada) had remarkably accurate memories of a stressful event involving weapons, even some months later. However, a key weakness of the study was that the witnesses who experienced the highest levels of stress were considerably closer to the crime. It may therefore have been their proximity that helped with the accuracy of their memory recall, rather than their increased arousal.

Deffenbacher (1983)

*Methods:*  reviewed 21 previous studies into EWT and anxiety between 1974 and 1997 (known as a ‘meta-analysis’), looking at the effects of heightened anxiety on accuracy of eyewitness recall.

*Results:* found that the stress- recall performance relationship followed an inverted-U function proposed by the Yerkes Dodson Curve (1908). This means that for tasks of moderate complexity (such as EWT), recall performances increased with heightened anxiety (stress) up to an optimal point where it starts to decline.

*Conclusions:* The presence of increased anxiety improves recall up to a point, after which it actively makes it worse.

Clifford and Scott (1978)

*Methods:* Showed one group of participants a film of a violent attack, and another control group a similar, but much less stressful and violent version of the film. They then asked the participants to recall 40 pieces of identical information.

*Results:* The researchers found that participants who saw the film of the violent attack remembered fewer of the 40 items of information about the event than the control group who saw the less stressful version.

*Conclusions:* Heightened anxiety reduces a person’s ability to accurately recall information. Since witnessing a real crime is very likely to be even more stressful than taking part in an experiment, the researchers further concluded that memory accuracy may well be even more affected in real life.