

PROBLEMS *with* EYEWITNESS

IDENTIFICATION

Why do eyewitnesses sometimes get it wrong?



AGE

RACE

1 PERSONAL FACTORS

People are better able to recognize faces of their own race or ethnic group than faces of another race or ethnic group.

2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EVENT

Time: How much time was the culprit in the eyewitness' view?

Lighting: Was the crime witnessed during the day? In a well-lit area? At night? In a dark place?

Disguise: Was the culprit wearing a disguise?

Distinctiveness of Appearance: Did the culprit look distinct? Did they have unique tattoos or scars?

Presence or Absence of a Weapon: Was the culprit in possession of a weapon, like a gun?



awareness

3 CHARACTERISTICS OF TESTIMONY

When did the eyewitness realize they were watching a crime?

4 SYSTEMIC ISSUES WITH EYEWITNESSES

Instructions: Did the police or the lawyers' instructions bias the eyewitness?

Information Leak: Did the the media or the police leak information about the suspect?

Design Flaw: Did the police use the best procedure to conduct the identification? Did they tell the eyewitness that the suspect might not be in the line-up?

Confirmation biases: Was something seen before the identification that biased the selection? Did the police officer give the eyewitness the impression that they made the "right" choice?

Relative-judgment decision process: Did the witness pick someone who looks most like the suspect or did they pick the person they thought they actually saw?

