To What Extent Does the Cross Race Effect and Education Level Impact the Accuracy of Eyewitness Testimony, Year II

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Researchers have investigated the Cross Race Effect – own race bias- before; however, not to the specificity of eyewitness testimony as this experiment does. Based on our research, we believe our study to be the first to examine how the Cross Race Effect applies to eyewitness testimony. This experiment investigated the impact of the Cross Race Effect and education level on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony. We hypothesized that members of the same race would be more accurate in identifying same race subjects and that education level would not impact eyewitness testimony. These hypotheses were reached by analysis of court cases, previous studies, and cognitive factors. We filmed four virtually identical videos depicting an armed theft in a jewelry store; each video had a criminal of a different race (Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian, and African American). We showed 330 subjects one of the videos, asked them three distracting questions, and then asked them to choose the perpetrator from a lineup of five suspects (same race). For each video, we tested 80 subjects, 20 (+/- 2) of each race. Statistical analyses confirmed the hypothesis that race does affect the accuracy of the identification. We then split the data into education level (high school, some college, Associate's Degree/trade school, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctoral Degree). The results and statistical tests showed that education does not affect the accuracy of identification. The data collected will be very helpful to law enforcement and attorneys, and point to issues regarding convictions strictly relying on eyewitnesses.

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