

# 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?



### 3 CHARACTERISTICS OF TESTIMONY



awareness

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 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?

