Eyewitness identification for multiple perpetrator crimes

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The over-arching aim of the research conducted for this thesis was to examine underlying issues in memory and decision-making that impact eyewitness identification procedures in the context of multiple perpetrator crimes. In one survey and five experiments, we (i) explored key concerns in multiple perpetrator identifications in police practice in three EU countries (Police Survey), (ii) tested the independence of multiple identification decisions made successively (Experiments 1, 2 and 3) and (iii) examined the purported utility of using other faces as contextual cues for recognizing the faces of multiple perpetrators (Experiments 4 and 5).

In the survey we asked police officers (from Sweden, Belgium, and the Netherlands) to describe how agencies in various countries conduct and regulate identification procedures with multiple perpetrators. Results demonstrated that practice converges when it comes to the use of sequential, photographic lineups, but diverges between and within countries on issues such as whether or not suspects of multiple perpetrator crimes should be placed in separate lineups. Results specifically highlight the role of context as one critical area for future research in identification for multiple perpetrator crimes (i.e., placing multiple suspects in the same lineup or asking eyewitnesses to look for a specific suspect).

In Experiments 1 and 2, participants watched a mock crime film involving three perpetrators and later made three showup identification decisions, one showup for each perpetrator. Experiments 1 and 2 used similar procedures, with the exception of varied patterns of target-presence. Across both experiments, evidence for sequential dependencies for choosing behavior was inconsistent. In Experiment 1, responses on the second, target-present showup assimilated towards previous choosing. However, in Experiment 2, responses on the second showup contrasted previous choosing regardless of target-presence. Experiment 3 examined whether methodological differences between the recognition and eyewitness paradigms used in previous research on sequential dependencies might account for the inconsistent findings in Experiments 1 and 2. Participants studied pairs of words, landscapes, or faces, and were later tested for recognition. Sequential dependencies were detected in recognition decisions over many trials, including recognition for faces: the probability of a yes response on the current trial increased if the previous response was also yes (vs. no). However, choosing behavior on previous trials did not predict individual recognition decisions on the current trial. This suggests that the integrity of identification and recognition decisions is not likely to be
impacted by making the multiple decisions in a row, and that it is more important to focus on initial bias in choosing behavior that is maintained throughout the trials.

In **Experiments 4 and 5**, we sought to (i) replicate facilitative effects in cued face recognition, to (ii) investigate the mechanisms underlying those effects, and (iii) determine whether such effects would extend to more than two faces. Participants encoded sets of individual, paired, or groups of four faces and were tested with no cues, correct cues (a face previously studied with the target test face), or incorrect cues (a never-before-seen face). Hit rates were not affected by either cue type or face encoding condition, but cuing of any kind (correct or incorrect) appeared to provide a protective buffer against false alarms (i.e., false recognition) in the two- and four-face conditions through reduced response bias. Our findings suggest that cued face recognition may be a useful technique to use for reducing false recognition rates in contexts with multiple faces. Throughout the thesis, we argue for the systematic examination of influential factors that are both unique and inherent to practice, memory, and decision-making for multiple perpetrator identification and recognition.