

Abstract

Facial identification among humans is a currently among one of the top concerns in law enforcement today. With eye witnesses being one of the primary sources of convictions in the U.S. legal system, correct positive identifications are essential to prevent a suspect from being falsely recognized as a perpetrator of a crime. Studies suggest that humans have a better ability to recognize someone of their own race better than someone of a different race, known as the own race bias, which is especially prevalent between African Americans and European Americans. Two methods suggest that this biasness can be eliminated. The exposure theory suggests that longer exposure to someone of a different race greatly increases one's ability to recognize them. The positive emotions theory states that experiencing positive emotions after meeting someone of a different race increases our ability to recognize them. The experiment compared these two techniques to see which one more effectively eliminated the own race bias. Results show that the exposure technique significantly reduced own race false identifications. These results may suggest how the own race bias is formed in that longer exposure to one's race has a greater effect increasing one's ability to make a positive identification.