



EYEWITNESS IDENTIFICATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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A large percent of eyewitness testimonies are inaccurate. According to the Innocence Project, “Mistaken eyewitness identifications contributed to approximately 71% of the more than 360 wrongful convictions in the United States overturned by post-conviction DNA evidence” (“Eyewitness Identification Reform”, n.d.). This poses the question as to why eyewitness testimony is highly valued even though there can be a high probability of error. Many factors can contribute to the faults in eyewitness identification. These factors can include limits on visual perception and memory, practices used by law enforcement, and legal standards and practices for use of eyewitness evidence in the courtroom (Albright, 2017). Hundreds of studies on eyewitness identification have been researched. Nevertheless, there are still hundreds of incarcerated individuals that were wrongfully convicted because of flawed eyewitness identification evidence based on unreliable variables. Previous research has been conducted on eyewitness identification. The prior research was completed by appraising systematic reviews. “However, none of the reviews met all current standards for conduction and reporting [a] systematic review, and few met even a majority of these standards, making [the] assessment of the credibility of their finding problematic” (National Research Council, 2014). One flaw found among some of the studies used to influence court policy or criminal procedure was that they weren’t reproducible. Many studies and much research has been conducted over the years. Still, further research needs to be completed to provide informed and scientifically backed recommendations for a more uniform procedure for eyewitness identification. “Systematic reviews of stronger research studies need to conform to current standards and be translated into terms that are useful for decision-makers” (National Research Council, 2014). This research project is aimed at continuing this process and providing plausible information that can be used in future research, court policies, and law enforcement procedures. A full systematic review of all studies and literature about eyewitness identification is in progress. Conducting the review begins with a search for all relevant studies, which in this case is anything eyewitness identification related. Next, the material must be sifted through to ensure that it meets the criteria of eligibility. The criteria for inclusion consist of testing the accuracy or confidence of a human visually identifying a face they have seen before and original data collection in the form of quantitative data. The process of eligibility involves several forms of evaluation. This evaluation helps to eliminate irrelevant literature by starting broad and then becoming more specific. For example, abstracts will be analyzed for relevance before an in-depth analysis of the full text. After all of the data is extracted it will be categorized into the variables they investigate. These findings help create the framework for the databases that will display all the syntheses and studies across variables. This database will be shared with researchers and practitioners to show areas that are rich in evidence, areas that may need more studies, and to help implement an agenda for research to answer significant gaps in knowledge. This research also aims to educate practice and research communities of the importance of reproducible methods of evidence-synthesis to increase

knowledge and improve procedures so that inaccurate convictions can be reduced, and reliable and valid eyewitness evidence of facial identification can be increased.