

## Book Reviews

Lampinen, J. M., Neuschatz, J. S., & Cling, A. D. (2012). *The Psychology of Eyewitness Identification: Essays in Cognitive Psychology*. Psychology Press

# The Psychology of Eyewitness Identification: Essays in Cognitive Psychology

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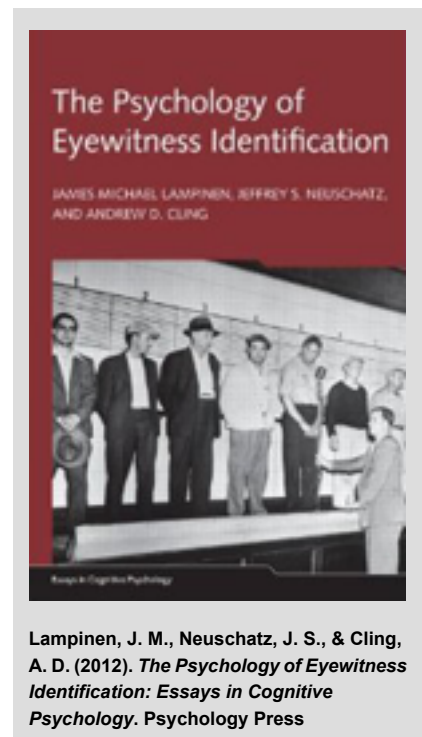
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'The Psychology of Eyewitness Identification' was written by James Michael Lampinen (professor of psychology at the University of Arkansas), Jeffrey S. Neuschatz (associate professor and chair of the psychology department, University of Alabama in Huntsville) and Andrew D. Cling (professor and chair of the department of philosophy at the University of Alabama in Huntsville) who combined have published well over a 100 book chapters and journal articles. The three authors have a large amount of experience in the field and of publishing scholarly work.

'The Psychology of Eyewitness Identification' discusses in detail research and issues relating to eyewitness identification, accuracy and reliability. Also included is a discussion of how research has impacted on practical aspects of life for example with social practice, police practice and legal practice. It is not only a book on the theory behind the topic but also an insight into practical aspects of theory – the best of both worlds. The back cover notes that "*the volume takes the perspective that research on eyewitness identification can be seen as a pragmatic example of how psychological science can be successfully applied to real world problems*" – and the book clearly demonstrates that eyewitness identification is an excellent example of how theory in psychology can be applied in 'real life'. Research has played an important role in developing techniques to



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try to ensure that eyewitness identifications are accurate and reliable, and in identifying factors which may impact on how reliable and accurate those identifications are – as a field it not only has theoretical value but also has practical value as well.

The book begins with the chapter ‘Twenty-Seven Years’ – an intriguing title for an intriguing chapter. Twenty-seven years is the length of time Michael Green spent in prison. Michael Green was convicted of a crime despite that eyewitness identification featured heavily in the evidence and the issues that exist with eyewitness identification. Twenty-years years later DNA evidence found that Michael Green was innocent – and as the authors note “*Michael Green will never get those years back*” (Lampinen, Neuschatz, & Cling, 2012, p. 2). This example clearly indicates how important eyewitness identification is and the role it can play in court cases – additionally the role it can play when innocent individuals are convicted. Furthermore this example and those of other similar cases highlight the importance of accurate and reliable eyewitness identification and testimony and appropriate techniques of interviewing and gathering information from the eyewitness – something which psychology has and can continue to play a key and significant role in. In this first chapter the authors note several factors which are involved in eyewitness identification – for example, line ups and foils. This is a concise introduction to some of the key aspects of eyewitness identification.

The second chapter moves on to consider ‘Theoretical Approaches to Eyewitness Identification’ and includes relevant theories to the area including a look at different types of memory (e.g. sensory memory, short-term memory, and long-term memory), signal detection theory, and dual process theories. It is a good overview of all the relevant theories. This is followed by a look at face processing and memory. This chapter provides an important introduction to the theories involved and their connection to eyewitness identification. As the first two chapters demonstrate the theory behind eyewitness identification is of course crucial to the field and theory plays a very important role as well in developing more practical aspects. Following this the next few chapters turn to consider the practical aspects in addition to the theory.

This look at practical issues begins in chapter three which looks at issues such as the factors and variables which can have an impact on eyewitness identification, reliability and accuracy. One of these factor is illumination (see also Johnson, 1976) – what impact does less or more illumination have on eyewitness identification, although the authors note that most of the research in this particular area has focused on photographs and that more research will be required to look at illumination in other situations. Another factor noted is distance (see also Loftus & Harley, 2005) – the amount of distance between the eyewitness and the person can impact on whether the eyewitness can reliably and accurately identify this person. An additional factor is the length of time (see also Memon, Hope, & Bull, 2003) the eyewitness saw the persons for. Another important and very interesting factor mentioned in this particular chapter is the weapon focus effect which suggests that if a weapon is present this may also impact on eyewitness identification and memory (Loftus, Loftus, & Messo, 1987; Kramer, Buckhout, & Eugenio, 1990; Pickel, 1999).

Characteristics of the witness are also discussed in the chapter, for example whether the witness was the victim or was a bystander (see also Kassin, 1984; Hosch, Leippe, Marchioni, & Cooper, 1984), intoxication (see also Yuille & Tollestrup, 1990) and characteristics of the perpetrator, for example, appearance (see also Cutler, Penrod, & Martens, 1987). A number of other factors including some other interesting factors such as glucose and also own-age bias are also discussed. The whole chapter is a very comprehensive look at factors and variables affecting eyewitness identification. This theme is continued in the following chapter (‘system variables’). The accuracy and

reliability of eyewitnesses not only involves aspects related to the individuals involved themselves or the situation but also to what occurs after the event such as questioning, line-ups and so on. The chapter includes a discussion of postevent information (Loftus, 1979), the cognitive interview (Fisher, McCauley, & Geiselman, 1994), and line-ups. These two chapters provide an excellent account of the factors and variables which can have an impact on eyewitness identification, reliability and accuracy. An understanding of these variables and factors and how they affect eyewitness identification can be very beneficial in terms of understanding eyewitness identification and also in developing techniques to ensure that eyewitness identification is both reliable and accurate.

The chapters in the book as mentioned previously in this review are a great look at the theory of the area but also of the practical aspects of this field. This is shown throughout the book, and chapter 6 ('field studies of eyewitness identification') discusses a number of field studies in the area including work by Tollestrup, Turtle, and Yuille (1994), Wright and McDaid (1996), and Klobuchar, Steblay, and Caligiuri (2006) among others. Each study's methodology and results are mentioned and then there is a comparison of the study's field findings with laboratory results. This chapter not only includes examples of research in the field, but also provides an insight into some of the issues involved in the area. It is certainly a very interesting chapter which concludes with a consideration of the problems, challenges and future directions in field research which is a thought provoking section. It is a great addition and aspect of the book. The final two chapters consist of a conclusion (chapter 8) and afterword (chapter 9). Eyewitness identification can be a complex field with a number of factors able to impact on reliability and accuracy however it is a field which can have large theoretical and practical implications which are also clearly demonstrated in throughout the book.

To conclude the authors have provided an exhaustive overview of the issues involved in eyewitness identification. This includes previous research including more recent research in the field and also key pieces of research which are highly influential in the area. Knowing the background to the field is also an important aspect in being able to continue with future research. Throughout the authors also consider future directions. Therefore the book can inform knowledge of the area but it also can also promote thinking about future research. The 'Essays in Cognitive Psychology' series always produces high quality books and 'The Psychology of Eyewitness Identification' continues that tradition. Furthermore, it is suitable for students and researchers alike as it is an accessible text that is very enjoyable to read and also very informative – two great qualities - and a book which is well worth reading for individuals interested in this kind of area.

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