

Unreliability of eyewitness testimonies

Psychology



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The paper "Unreliability of Eyewitness Testimonies" is a great example of a psychology assignment.

From the first image taken from the recordings of a closed circuit television at a crime scene, I was confident that I could identify the culprit from the list of photos provided. This is because I thought I identified from the photos the person who according to me resembled the culprit.

Concerning the case of Ronald Cotton, the unreliability of eyewitness is evident. Firstly, there is the issue of resemblance versus exactly. When eyewitnesses are required to identify the suspect from a group of photos presented, it is sometimes thought that the suspect's photo must be among those presented. They, therefore, tend to select the photo that closely resembles what is in their memory. What is not explained in many instances is that the suspects may not be among them. However, even when this is explained there is still the probability that the witness will compare the photos rather than select. Psychologists call this relative judgment (Wells 87).

Ronald Cotton's conviction was based on the testimony of one of the witnesses who identified his photo from the list. The judge did not wait to listen to the testimony of another eyewitness who selected a different photo from the same list. The fact that a different person from the same list was selected confirms the relative unreliability of the first witness's testimony and the necessity for further investigations.

Thirdly, the other piece of evidence used against the suspect was that in his home was found a flashlight that fit the description given by the victim. This probably not being a special kind of flashlight, was expected in almost every house in the locality. The judge would not have depended on this evidence

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and getting a DNA test was the only option. This needed to be performed early enough in the trial of the suspect.

Although eyewitnesses are used to identifying suspects more investigations should be done to prevent wrongful convictions.