

# Merits and demerits of police identification

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? Discuss any four types of police identification parade emphasizing on their respective merits and short comings. Police identification parade can be referred to as a situation whereby suspects believed to have committed a crime are presented or lined-up for witnesses to identify if indeed the one or group of persons who committed the crime is amongst the line-up. This method is used in order to help the police confirm if indeed suspect did commit the crime. There are several ways in which police identification parades can be conducted.

Depending on the type of situation and resources available for use; be it human or technological will most preferably assist the police on what methods to put in (type of identification parade). When police forces are carrying out their functions, they also have a duty to have regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and to take steps to foster good relations. The main focus of my study is to address only four of these identification parades and analyze into detail their main objectives and discuss their merits and where they fall short.

Some of the identification parades we know of may weigh in different levels with regards to effectiveness. Others are judged to be more effective while some others are least effective. In this code, identification by an eye-witness arises when a witness who has seen the offender committing the crime and is given an opportunity to identify a person suspected of involvement in the offence in a video identification or similar procedure. From a legal point of view the question that an identification parade attempts to answer is whether the suspect is in fact the culprit.

First of all, I would like to discuss about the ' video identification'. With this method, suspects are kept in a confined area or room under a surveillance camera. A ' video identification' is when the witness is shown moving images of a known suspect, together with similar images of others who resemble the suspect. Sometimes in absence of the videos photographs of assumed suspects are shown to the witness to help identify the culprit. Even though it is sometimes useful, it is not the best since it shows still-life images which shows only one sided angle on the view of things and thereby makes it difficult for identification.

The video is more advantageous in suspect identification because since there are moving images and gives different angles on the view of things. Examples are; the different kinds of expressions and mood swings exhibited by, the witness can easily identify the suspect if indeed he or she is part. These eye-witness identification procedures are designed to test an eye witness' ability to identify suspects and to provide safeguards against mistaken identity. Secondly, the identification parade that will be considered here is the ' line-up'.

With this procedure, suspects are arranged or lined up for witnesses to view and see which of them are or is the culprit. Here, the police officer in charge instructs the suspects to turn to whichever direction the witness asks. The witness is therefore asked to point out to the real culprit(s) who indeed committed the crime. Since this is an open parade, things could get complicated and physical in the sense that, if the witness pin points the suspect, and tempers are not calm, the suspect might step forward and harass the witness physically.

In some cases, witnesses might be forced to give false data when they stare directly into faces of the suspects. Some suspects make facial expressions which are very threatening to witnesses and therefore conclude that the witness is not part of the parade for fear for their life. In other cases too, the witness might point to the wrong person who also has an appearance like that of a criminal (shabbily dressed, muscular, bony face, black lips) . Also depending on the type of question the witness is asked, he or she might give false information.

Example: if the police asks; “ which of them attacked you or committed the offence? ” the witness is implied to just chose a suspect even if, the real culprit is not among the parade. Such questions are imperatives which do not really ask a direct question but instead expects you to comply or conform. Apart from this method shortcoming, there is no doubt that it’s sometimes reliable. Thirdly, identifications can be carried out by using a one-way mirror which is a better procedure as compared to that of the open line-ups.

With this method, suspects are lined up in a room which is much secured with glass windows from which the witness can have a clear view of all the suspects present. The windows here are made of glass which are tinted, so suspects do not see whatever that goes on outside but the witness who is outside the room sees all that goes on inside. Identification of culprit(s) becomes difficult for the witness if suspects are dressed in almost the same way and there is the chance that, there exist some similarities between any of the suspects, especially when the culprit is involved.

Also not all eye witness' have very good memory when it comes to facial recognition. Furthermore, there is the sort of identification which has to do with verbal recognition. Here, different set of audio recordings of different suspects are selected and then played for the witness to identify the culprit. This method is only used in critical situations where the witness did not see the suspect but heard the person speak. This could be difficult for the witness to identify especially when the tapes been played are similar.

Sometimes too, the suspect is kept in a confined room with a recording device and is asked by the police to mention specific words suggested by the witness. These words are sometimes the ones the witness heard the suspect say at the time of the incident. In conclusion to the above procedures, the police force can put in severe measures that could enhance or yield positive and effective results to make their work much easier and simpler. There are also instances whereby two or more procedures of identification are incorporated into one to help solve cases which are very delicate and special.