



LONDON SOUTH BANK
UNIVERSITY

Nuffield Foundation
Eyewitness Identification Evidence
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Identification by Older Witness

Dr Rachel Wilcock

Why is it Important to Consider Older Adults as Witnesses?

- In 2006 11.3 million people were of state pensionable age. This is projected to rise to *12.2 million in 2010, 12.7 million in 2020*, and almost *15 million by 2031* (ONS, 2008).
- Older people are more likely to witness crimes and be victims (Wilcock et al, 2008).
- In 2001/2 there were 19,400 reported cases of distraction burglaries where the victim was 60 and over (Thornton et al. 2003).

Implications of Aging for Witness Performance

- Losses in the sensory system (Schneider & Pichora-Fuller, 2000).
- Deficits in paying attention to information in their environment (McDowd & Shaw, 2000).
- Less likely to be proficient at taking in information (encoding) (Rabinowitz, Craik, & Ackerman, 1982).

Implications of Aging for Witness Performance

- Older adults have poorer memory for events (episodic memory) (Balota, Dolan, & Duchek, 2000).
- Older adults are poorer at making judgments about the origin of memories (Spencer & Raz, 1994).

Older Witnesses Identification Performance

Findings from Psychological Research

Performance on
Perpetrator
Present Line-ups

	Correct Rejection	False ID
Young	60% (54)	40% (36)
Old	33% (30)	67% (60)

Performance on
Perpetrator
Absent Line-ups

	Hit	False ID	Incorrect Rejection
Young	59% (54)	11% (10)	30% (27)
Old	42% (38)	39% (35)	19% (17)

Older Witnesses Identification Performance Findings from Police Data

• Identification decisions made by witnesses aged 60 to 98 years were collected over a one year period (2005/6) by a number of divisions across 10 police forces in England and Wales.

	Witness Performance
Identified suspect	25% (75)
Identified Foil	18% (53)
No Identification	57% (172)
Total	100% (300)

Older Witnesses Identification Performance Findings from Police Data

	Young - Old 60 - 79 years	Old - Old 80 - 98 years
Identified suspect	27% (60)	19% (15)
Identified Foil	17% (38)	19% (15)
No identification	56% (124)	62% (48)
Total	100% (222)	100% (78)

Where Do We Go From Here?

- Try to Improve the performance of older witnesses:
 - Mental context reinstatement
 - Line-up presentation
 - **Line-up instructions**

Memory for Non-Biased Line-up

Instructions *‘the perpetrator may or may not be present in the lineup’*

- Older participants failed to remember these: 91% vs 75% & 68% vs 46% (Rose et al. 2003; 2005).
- Those older participants who failed to remember them made more false identifications.
- Research has demonstrated the importance of non-biased line-up instructions (Malpass & Devine, 1981).

Methods for Reducing False Ids

Pre identification questions had a beneficial effect for young adults (Dysart & Lindsay, 2001).

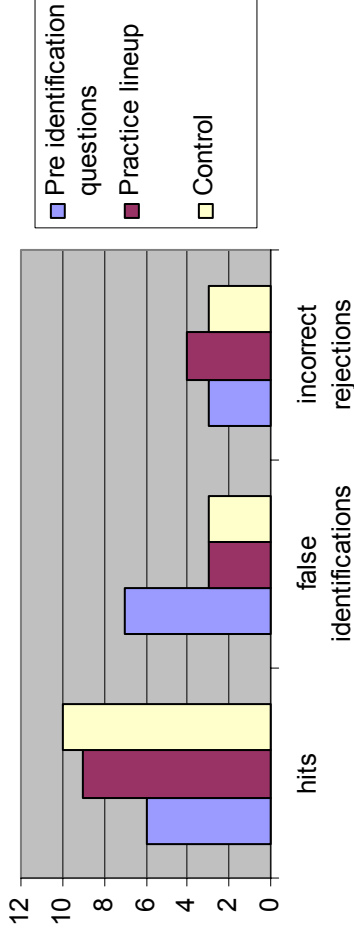
- How good a memory do you have for the perpetrator?
- How confident are you that you would be able to identify perpetrator?
- How confident are you that you would be able to say none of them if the perpetrators face was absent?

Practice line-ups have been shown to aid the identification performance of children (Schwartz-Kenney, Bottoms, & Goodman, 1996).

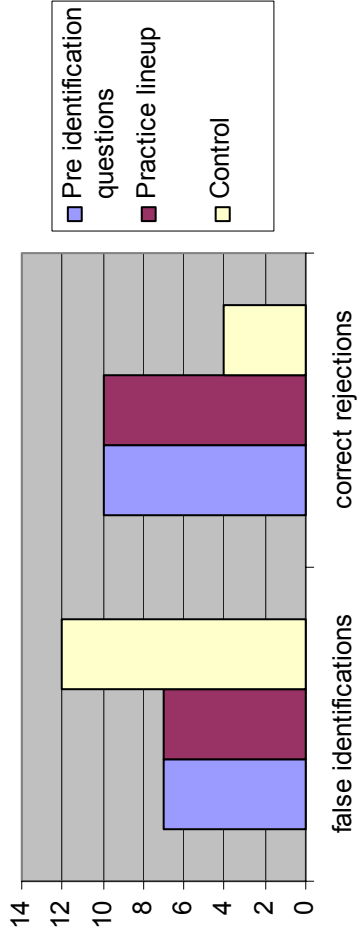


Study 1

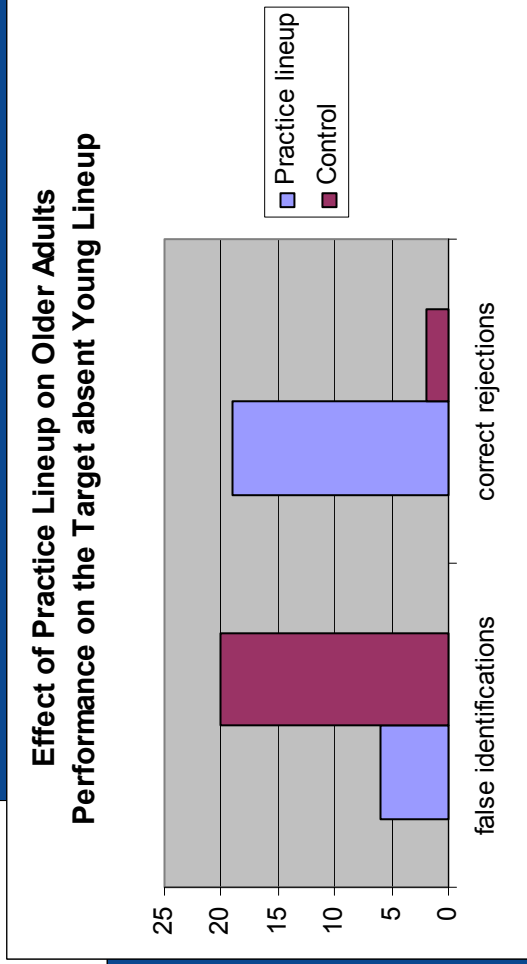
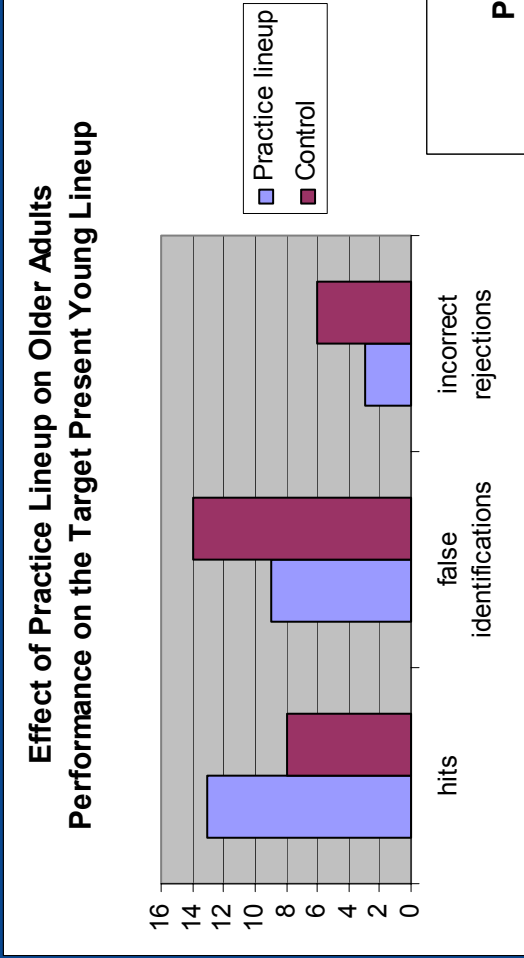
Effect of Pre Lineup Procedure on Older Adults
Performance on the Target Present Lineup



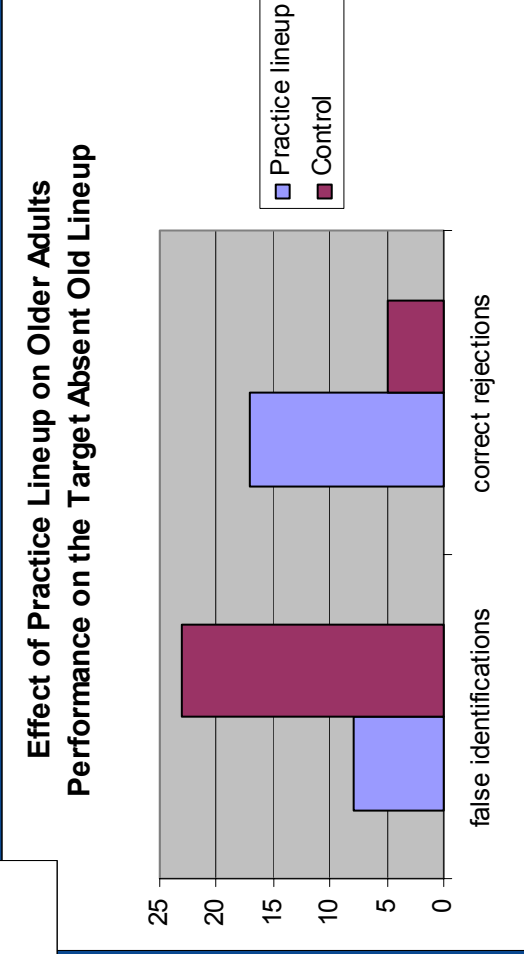
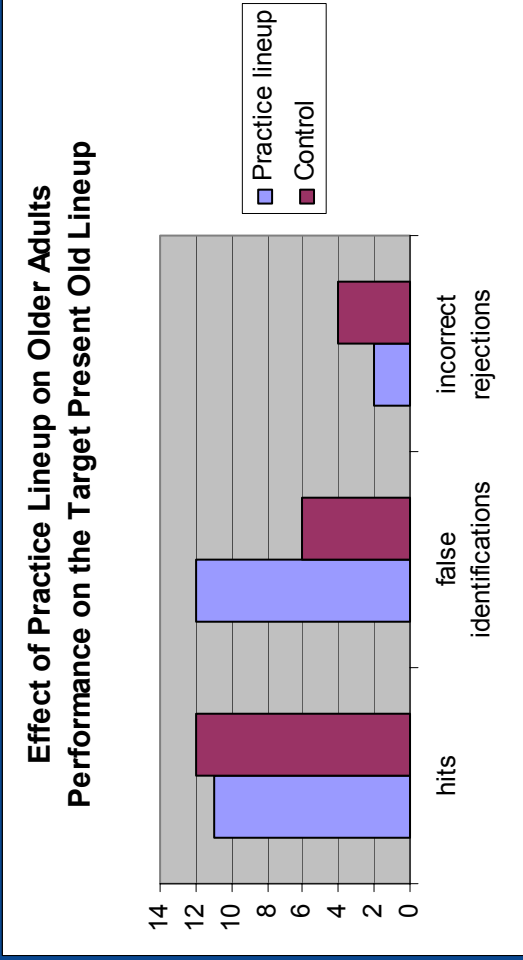
Effect of pre Lineup Procedure on Older Adults
Performance on the Target Absent Lineup



Study 2 Young Line-up



Study 2 Old Line-up



Summary & The Future

- Older witnesses are generally poorer than younger witnesses. More research needs to be conducted to look at ways of improving their performance.
- A practice line-up may be beneficial, but it needs replication.
- Individual differences: Research presented today has examined data from large groups of participants. However, it is important to acknowledge that there is variability in the performance of older witnesses.

Any Questions?

E-mail: wilcockr@lsbu.ac.uk

Telephone: 0207 815 5857