Double-Blind Sequential Lineups: Field Experiment Results

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A Test of the Simultaneous vs. Sequential Lineup Methods

An Initial Report of the AJS National Eyewitness Identification Field Studies

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The Double-Blind Sequential Lineup

- Rationale: Witnesses compare photos in simultaneous lineup to make a decision
  - Relative judgment vs. absolute judgment
- Sequential lineup: Photos one at a time
- Double-Blind: Lineup administrator does not know who the suspect is
Successful Eyewitness Identification Reform: Ramsey County’s Blind Sequential Lineup Protocol

By Susan Gaertner, Ramsey County Attorney, Saint Paul, Minnesota; and John Harrington, Chief of Police, Saint Paul, Minnesota
Research Objectives

- Direct comparison of sequential and simultaneous procedures in the field

- Scientifically-sound research design

- Laptop computer delivery of lineups
  - standardized, consistent procedures
  - record of all witness responses, including audio
  - preserved documentation of lineup photos
  - systematic collection of case-related data
Features: The “Gold Standard”

- Double-blind lineups (all)
- Random assignment to sequential or simultaneous procedure
- Random assignment of photo positions in the lineup
- 1 suspect per lineup + 5 fillers
Do Any Of These Individuals Look Familiar To You?

1

2

3

4

5

6
Does This Person Look Familiar To You?

1

[Image of a person]
Charlotte–Mecklenburg NC
Tucson AZ
San Diego CA
Austin TX

855 lineups
497 “protocol–consistent”
## Results: Eyewitness decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sequential %</th>
<th>Simultaneous %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspect ID</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filler pick</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>18.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No pick</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>56.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of witnesses who pick from the lineup:

- Sequential: 69.1% chose the suspect
- Simultaneous: 58.4% chose the suspect

No picks:
- Sequential: more likely to use “not sure” (47% vs. 19%)
  -- 29% of seq “not-sure” are suspect
Conclusions

- Sequential lineup significantly reduces mistaken identifications
- Sequential lineup is just as effective in producing suspect identifications
- Sequential witness is less likely to reject the lineup altogether when not identifying any photo
- Results consistent with decades of lab research on eyewitness memory principles
Thank you

- Police Departments
- American Judicature Society
- Innocence Project
- Police Foundation
- Center for Problem Oriented Policing
- Open Society Foundations
- Laura and John Arnold Foundation
- JEHT Foundation
- National Institute of Justice
- Mike Garner, SunGard Public Sector, Inc.
Results

Figure 2. Percentages of Witnesses Identifying the Suspect, a Filler, or Making No Identification for the Simultaneous and Sequential Procedures [N = 497]
Figure 3. Percentages of Suspect and Filler Identifications Among Those Who Attempted an Identification for the Simultaneous and Sequential Procedures [N = 207]
Figure 4. Percentages of "Not Sure" Responses and Lineup Rejection Responses Among Those Making No Identification [N = 288]