I Saw The Whole Thing, But I Can’t Remember What I Saw:  
A Model of Individual Differences in Eyewitness Ability

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Eyewitness Process

- See event
- Process event
- Remember event
- Recall event

Previous Research Problems

- No real theory
- Use of single event
- Method of recall
  - oral v. written
  - free recall v. prompted recall v. multiple choice

Good eyewitnesses have the tendency to:

- Be aware of external activity
- Notice detail
- Distinguish among people
- Remember events
- Verbalize events

Our Study

- 157 students took the TEA
- Witnessed two separate events, weeks apart
- Wrote free-recall accounts followed by multiple choice
- Researchers correlated TEA scores with eyewitness accuracy accounts

Test of Eyewitness Ability (TEA)

- 27 items
- Five factors
  - General awareness
  - Tendency to notice
  - Ability to distinguish
  - Memory for events
  - Tendency to verbalize
- Coefficient alpha of .81

Results

- Correlation of .27 between accuracy scores for the two events
- Best predictions were for free recall rather than multiple-choice
- SAT-V predicted but not SAT-Q
Test of Eyewitness Ability (TEA)

General Awareness
I usually pay more attention to my thoughts than to what goes on around me (R)
I get lost or disoriented easily (R)
I am almost always aware of what goes on around me
I am good at noticing what goes on around me
I often don’t realize it when people are talking to me (R)

Tendency to Notice
I usually notice how people dress
I usually notice when friends do something a little different with their hair
When at a restaurant or social event, I look around often to see who is there and what they are doing
If I meet a stranger, I can tell if they have dyed their hair
I will usually notice if a person’s shoes don’t match their outfit
I am good at describing what people look like after I have met them
When I describe people, I use lots of little details
If friends rearrange their furniture or get something new, I will notice

Memory
I remember events better than most people do
I have a good memory for conversations
I am good at remembering exact lines or scenes from movies I have seen
I can recognize people weeks after I have met them, even if I only spoke to them for a short period of time
I am good at remembering people’s names
I am good at remembering phone numbers
I easily recognize a place, even if I have been there only once

Ability to Distinguish
To me, most people look alike (R)
When at a restaurant, I have trouble remembering or recognizing my server (R)
When watching a TV show, I often get the actors confused (R)
People just seem to look so much alike (R)

Verbal Ability
I can tell a story with the best of them
I enjoy telling stories about things that have happened to me
I am good at remembering and telling jokes

Questions are answered on a 5 point scale with 1=disagree and 5=agree

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## Correlation Between Sex, TEA, Cognitive Ability, and Eyewitness Accuracy

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<th>Event 1</th>
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FR = free-recall  
MC = multiple-choice