Cognitive Psychology and the Law: Cross-Race Identification

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The difference between the feature-based and configuration-based visual recognition is that within the feature-based mechanism person initially identifies the input’s parts i.e., shape, qualities, colors, and combination of all the input’s part create identification while in configuration-based visual recognition person is less sensitive towards the features and physical appearance of the other he rely on overall collection of inputs. People identify faces more accurately through the configuration-based recognition mechanism as our brain works on this mechanism. People identify the difference and recognize others as a whole rather than some specific feature like height, complexion, face shape, etc. This is the crucial difference between the two that one only focuses on the features while others rely on the overall configuration for identification.

People identify others through faces and evidence shows that every individual is more familiar and accurately identifies the people of the same race. Cross-race identification is difficult for the people because people become more familiar with their own race features and when they rely on configuration-based mechanism they identify same-race people accurately as they are extremely acquainted with features that are most common within that specific race. When it comes, the case of cross-race identification people feels less effective and sensitive for recognizing other as a whole.

Our brain plays a vital role in the identification of others. People get familiar with the features and configuration as a whole of the society they are living in. Therefore a person who lives in a diverse society recognizes cross-race faces more accurately than the person who lives within-race (Butavicius et al., 2008). An experiment was conducted in which people have to recognize faces from the photos of people from cross-race. Results show that people who are familiar with the feature from other race identified the photos more accurately and faster than the people who lived within the race.

References

Butavicius, M., Mount, C., MacLeod, V., Vast, R., Graves, I., & Sunde, J. (2008). An Experiment on Human Face Recognition Performance for Access Control. In I. Lovrek, R. J. Howlett, & L. C. Jain (Eds.), *Knowledge-Based Intelligent Information and Engineering Systems* (pp. 141–148). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.