**PhD Research Project**

People with a mild learning disability and the construction of facial composites

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**Summary:**

Victims of crime and witnesses to crimes where the perpetrator is unknown are often required to provide a facial description of the perpetrator’s face to the police. The quality of this description can play a crucial role in the criminal investigation procedure. Individuals with a mild learning disability (mLD) often have limited verbal abilities (Emerson, 2001), which might act as a barrier to them providing reliable evidence. This research project investigates the ability of witnesses with mLD to recognize and describe faces, and to use existing and newly developed facial composite systems such as E-fit (Electronic Facial Identification Technique) and Evofit (Evolutionary Facial Identification Technique). To date, a survey was designed to collect information on composite systems currently utilized by UK law enforcement agencies and the attitudes and experiences of operators regarding witnesses with LD. An experimental study compared the ability of participants with LD to recognize and describe faces to that of non-mLD participants. A second experimental study examined whether the inclusion of visual prompts would help people with mLD to provide better descriptions of unfamiliar faces. The forensic implications of the findings will be discussed as will possible future research directions.

**Publications:**  
  
[**SIPR Research Summary No 2: People with a mild learning disability and the construction of facial composites**](https://web.archive.org/web/20130704120656/http:/www.sipr.ac.uk/downloads/Research_Summaries/Research_Summary_2.pdf) [May 2009]  
  
Links to other publications from this research wil be placed here in due course.