

# GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

## Newsletter of the Office of Grants and Program Review

November 2003

### Study Aims to Understand Memory Processes in Eyewitness Identification

Staff Writer: Lindsey N. Gosma, Writing Assistant

Eyewitness testimony has always been an important element in criminal court proceedings. In recent years, techniques involving DNA evidence have also become a means of determining guilt or innocence. Unfortunately, these two forms of identification sometimes come into conflict. Before DNA analysis, many criminals were convicted based solely upon eyewitness accounts. A recent study of these cases found that 90% of wrongful convictions were due to errors in eyewitness identification. Researchers wondered how these identification errors happen and if anything could be done to prevent these errors from occurring.

Dr. David Ross, UC Foundation Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology, and Dr. Tanja Rapus, Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department, are also asking these questions. Recently, Drs. Ross and Rapus received \$254,999 for their project entitled "Understanding Unconscious Transference and Improving Lineup Identification Accuracy in Adult and Elderly Witnesses." The National Science Foundation (NSF) is funding this project as a part of their Research in Undergraduate Institutions (RUI) initiative.

Unconscious Transference is defined as the misidentification of a familiar but innocent person from a police lineup. Eyewitnesses can unconsciously confuse the faces of familiar individuals who had nothing to do with the crime, but are somehow connected to the situation. Misidentified individuals can resemble the actual criminal, or they can interact with the eyewitness in a manner similar to that of the criminal. For example, a ticket agent misidentified one of his patrons as the robber who attacked the agent while selling tickets. This type of unconscious transference occurred because the agent remembered the face, but not the circumstances.

The study conducted by Drs. Ross and Rapus is one of the first attempts to examine unconscious transference in the elderly. Many studies have focused on children and young adults, but, as the population ages, there is a need for more research on the potential effects of aging on memory and identification. Results from their study will be compared across age groups, thus producing a developmental examination of unconscious transference. Drs. Ross and Rapus hope that their research will determine if and how unconscious transference occurs and if it varies with age.

A second part of their research involves the use of lineup instruc-

tions given to eyewitnesses to improve the accuracy of their identification. Such instructions advise the eyewitness not to base identification on either familiarity or physical similarity alone, but to recall the particular situation in question. Such cues may reduce the occurrence of unconscious transference as witnesses are more conscious of the decision-making process.

Drs. Ross and Rapus plan to present their findings at national and international conferences in psychology and law research and also to journals for publication. Through their research, they hope to provide suggestions and training recommendations to police on improving lineup identification accuracy. Their work is particularly important because Tennessee is one of only two states in the nation to bar expert testimony regarding the accuracy of eyewitness accounts in court. Thus, most juries are unaware of the problems that plague eyewitness identification. Through their research, and a multi-disciplinary Council on Judicial Studies that Dr. Ross founded on campus, the researchers hope to raise awareness about eyewitness misidentification and to improve eyewitness accuracy.

# GRANTS AND RESEARCH

November 1, 2003 — November 30, 2003

## FUNDED GRANTS

### COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

#### DR. ANN HOLMES, DR. JONATHAN MIES

Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC)	Curriculum Development & Content-Area Workshop for Middle School Teachers of Earth Science in Southeastern TN	\$45,897.
--	---	-----------

#### DR. LAUREN INGRAHAM, DR. JENNIFER BEECH

THEC	Using Nonfiction to Build Critical Literacy	\$62,597.
------	---	-----------

#### DR. BARBARA MEDLEY

City of Chattanooga	311 Customer Satisfaction Survey	\$1,236.
---------------------	----------------------------------	----------

#### DR. BARBARA MEDLEY

Chattanooga Endeavors	Employers Survey	\$3,975.
-----------------------	------------------	----------

#### DR. RON SMITH, DR. OSSAMA SALEH

THEC	Applications of Algebra, II	\$70,831.
------	-----------------------------	-----------

### COLLEGE OF EDUCATION & APPLIED PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

#### MS. ANNE GAMBLE

Hamilton County Department of Education	Services for Students with Disabilities	\$3,220.
---	---	----------

#### MS. CYNTHIA WOOD

Hamilton County Department Of Education	Career Development Workshops for Parents 2004	\$10,000.
---	---	-----------

### COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING & COMPUTER SCIENCE

#### DR. KYLE ANDERSON, DR. JOSEPH KIZZA, DR. ANDY NOVIBLSKI

Symantec Corporation	Software for Networks Security and Information Forensics Lab	\$21,000.
----------------------	--	-----------

#### SIMCENTER

Veridian Systems, Inc.	DARPA Friction Drag Reduction Program 2003-2004	\$75,000.
------------------------	---	-----------

### OTHER

#### MS. BETH DODD

TN Department of Education	Services to Vocational Health Science Teachers 2003-2004	\$10,910.
----------------------------	--	-----------

#### MR. JONATHAN LOONEY

TN Student Assistance Corp.	Peer Counselor Program 2003-2004	\$53,460.
-----------------------------	----------------------------------	-----------