# Applying General Recognition Theory to Perception of Racially Stereotypical Faces

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Facial features that are considered stereotypical of a group may cause individuals to form suppositions about the person without any objective basis.  This is supported by studies that show when White individuals view Black faces, implicit associations related to crime and violence may influence how these faces are construed. For example, stereotypically Black features are linked more often with stereotype-consistent labels, more often correctly remembered as criminals, and are more often incorrectly miscategorized as criminals, regardless of the actual race or gender of the face (Kleider, Cavrak, & Knuycky, 2012).  The purpose of the present study is to investigate the perceptual and decisional sources of errors in classifying Black versus White facial features in the context of occupations with positive or negative connotations (e.g., "teacher" or "drug dealer").  General Recognition Theory (GRT; Ashby & Townsend, 1986) will be used to characterize participants' perceptual discrimination ability along stereotypical feature-dimensions (i.e., Black versus White stereotypical features) and expressed attitude of the facial stimuli (i.e., negatively or positively valenced emotion).  Participants will complete an identification task made up of 4 categories.  The categories will be created by factorially combining two levels of stereotypicality for Black faces with two levels of facial expression related to aggressiveness or attitude.  Each category will be comprised of several examples at each factorial level.  Discrimination of stimuli will provide the data to assess any links individuals may make between stereotypically racial features and more aggressive negative attitudes.  The results of this study will help us understand why individuals create illusory links between racial stereotypes and the attitudes of others.  This information can be used to make individuals more aware of the decisions they make regarding others with stereotypical features.  Increasing this awareness could help prevent unconscious stereotyping of others. The content of this research could be used to develop training or intervention programs, such as in police or other work forces, in order to decrease racially biased decision making.