Face Recognition – Student's handout

Warmer activity

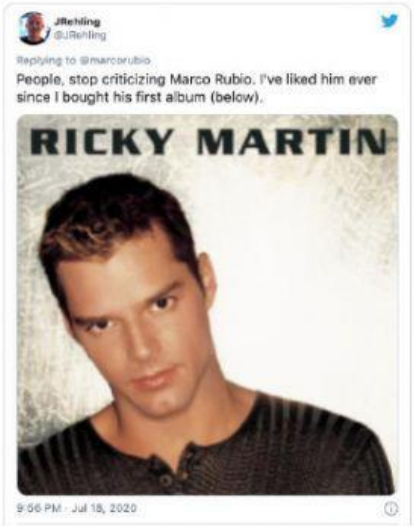
Look at these pictures and decide if they are of the same man. What are the similarities and differences between them?

After the passing of Congressman John Lewis, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, went on Twitter to honor him. This is what happened:

He then rushed to correct his mistake:

But it was too late. The damage was done:

American serial killer Ted Bundy ⇧



Look at the following pictures and decide if the pairs of photographs show the same person:

Video activity (C1-C2)

Watch the video and answer the following questions:

Video: Why Our Brains Recognize Faces So Easily... or Fail at It (https://youtu.be/lwEvw6a1fS8)

1. What's the area of the brain in charge of recognizing human faces?
2. Why are some scientists unsure about the specificity of the FFA to faces?
3. What is pareidolia?
4. Why is it called the Thatcher illusion?
5. What is prosopagnosia?

Watch the video again and complete the gaps in the sentences below:

1. We are constantly recognizing faces, and most of us take this for _____.
2. Distinguishing faces in a crowd should be as difficult as distinguishing birds in a _____ or _____ in a wall.
3. We know how facial features are usually _____ in relation to one another and can see them all at _____.
4. You might have seen pictures of faucets, or rocks, or even toast where you can't _____ but see like a goofy little face in there.
5. Take the Thatcher illusion, named after Margaret Thatcher, _____ face was originally used to demonstrate this phenomenon.
6. For some of you, _____, face identification might actually not be any _____ than telling birds apart.
7. For instance, they often actively memorize _____ features about friends.
8. They might just assume that they are bad at faces and _____ it off.

Gapped text (C1-C2)

Read the text and fill the gaps with the removed paragraphs found below. There is an extra paragraph, which you do not need to use.

There's A Test That Tells You If You're A 'Super-Recognizer' Of Faces, And You Can Take It Right Now

By Erin Brodwin, 18 Aug 2016

I've seen a lot of faces that I can't forget.

[1]

And I'm not alone. Josh P. Davis, a psychology professor at the University of Greenwich in England who studies the phenomenon, told Yahoo Health that he estimates some 1% of the population could qualify as super-recognizers.

[2]

In 2009, a team of neuroscientists from Harvard did one of the first studies of super-recognizers. In it, they looked at just four people who claimed to have an unusually good ability to recognize faces.

[3]

One of the people in the study told the researchers that she tried to hide her ability and "pretend that I don't remember [people] ... because it seems like I **stalk** them, or that they mean more to me than they do."

[4]

But they still haven't found very many. All of the studies of super-recognizers to date are based on tiny samples of people — anywhere from just two individuals to a half-dozen people. For that reason, it's tough to **draw** too many definitive **conclusions** about the ability.

[5]

In a recent study in the journal PLOS ONE, researchers studied two **so-called** memory champions — people who'd competed extensively in memory contests and had even achieved recognition in the Guinness World Book of Records for their memorization abilities. It turns out that the memory skills of the champs were **merely** average when it comes to face-recognition abilities.

[6]

In fact, in the 1990s researchers identified a region of the brain called fusiform face area (FFA) which, when damaged, can cause the afflicted person to lose the ability to recognize faces. Neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks was a famous prosopagnosia sufferer, and wrote about his condition in his book “The Mind’s Eye.”

“I am much better at recognizing my neighbor’s digs than my neighbors themselves,” Sacks wrote.

Removed paragraphs

[A] What the researchers wanted to know, then, was if there were more super-recognizers out there. So they came up with a series of tests designed to find out if other people had their subjects' **uncanny** abilities. Sure enough, they found a few more super-recognizers.

[B] "These findings **lend** support to the idea that face processing abilities are at least to a certain extent hard-wired," the researchers wrote in their paper.

[C] The research has, however, suggested that super-recognizing is fundamentally different from memory, and isn't a skill that can be **sharpened** with training, like some aspects of traditional memorization can.

[D] No, I'm not talking about being in love, as The Beatles lyrics might imply. Instead, I may be a super-recognizer, meaning that other peoples' faces get strangely **seared into** my brain — even those of complete strangers. It's not that I necessarily want to remember them — I just can't seem to help it.

[E] **Still**, some police units in the UK are using people with the ability — many of whom Davis has tested personally — to help identify suspects from crime scenes.

[F] He developed a brief online test for super-recognizers, and you can take it now. Keep in mind, Davis notes: "If you do very well then you *may* be a super-recognizer." If you want to know for sure, then you can **inquire** with his team about additional testing.

[G] All of them told the researchers about instances when they'd recognized practical strangers: family members they hadn't seen for decades or actors they'd **glimpsed** once in an ad and then seen again in a movie. They felt like there was something wrong with them.

Face recognition Test (5 min)

https://greenwichuniversity.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e3xDuCccGAdgbfT