

Biased lineup instructions and face identification from video images.

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Previous eyewitness memory research has shown that biased lineup instructions reduce identification accuracy, primarily by increasing false-positive identifications in target-absent lineups. Because some attempts at identification do not rely on a witness's memory of the perpetrator but instead involve matching photos to images on surveillance video, the authors investigated the effects of biased instructions on identification accuracy in a matching task. In Experiment 1, biased instructions did not affect the overall accuracy of participants who used video images as an identification aid, but nearly all correct decisions occurred with target-present photo spreads. Both biased and unbiased instructions resulted in high false-positive rates. In Experiment 2, which focused on video-photo matching accuracy with target-absent photo spreads, unbiased instructions led to more correct responses (i.e., fewer false positives). These findings suggest that investigators should not relax precautions against biased instructions when people attempt to match photos to an unfamiliar person recorded on video.

J Gen Psychol. 2008 Jan;135(1):23-36. Thompson WB, Johnson J. Department of Psychology, Niagara University, Niagara Falls, NY 14109, USA. wbt@niagara.edu