

BICULTURAL IDENTITY & MEMORY CONFORMITY

What is the effect of a majority group's judgment on bicultural children of immigrants' ability to identify a criminal suspect?

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INTRODUCTION

Since 1989, post-conviction DNA evidence has illustrated that mistaken eyewitness identification has contributed to approximately 69% of overturned wrongful convictions. Memory conformity, in particular, has been researched as a cause of eyewitness identification inaccuracy. However, there is a gap in the literature on how race and ethnicity may affect the susceptibility of eyewitnesses to blame conformity.

An explanation to why bicultural children of immigrants conform when they have heightened sense of visible minority status is that they are compensating for physical differences (Tafardi et al., 2002).

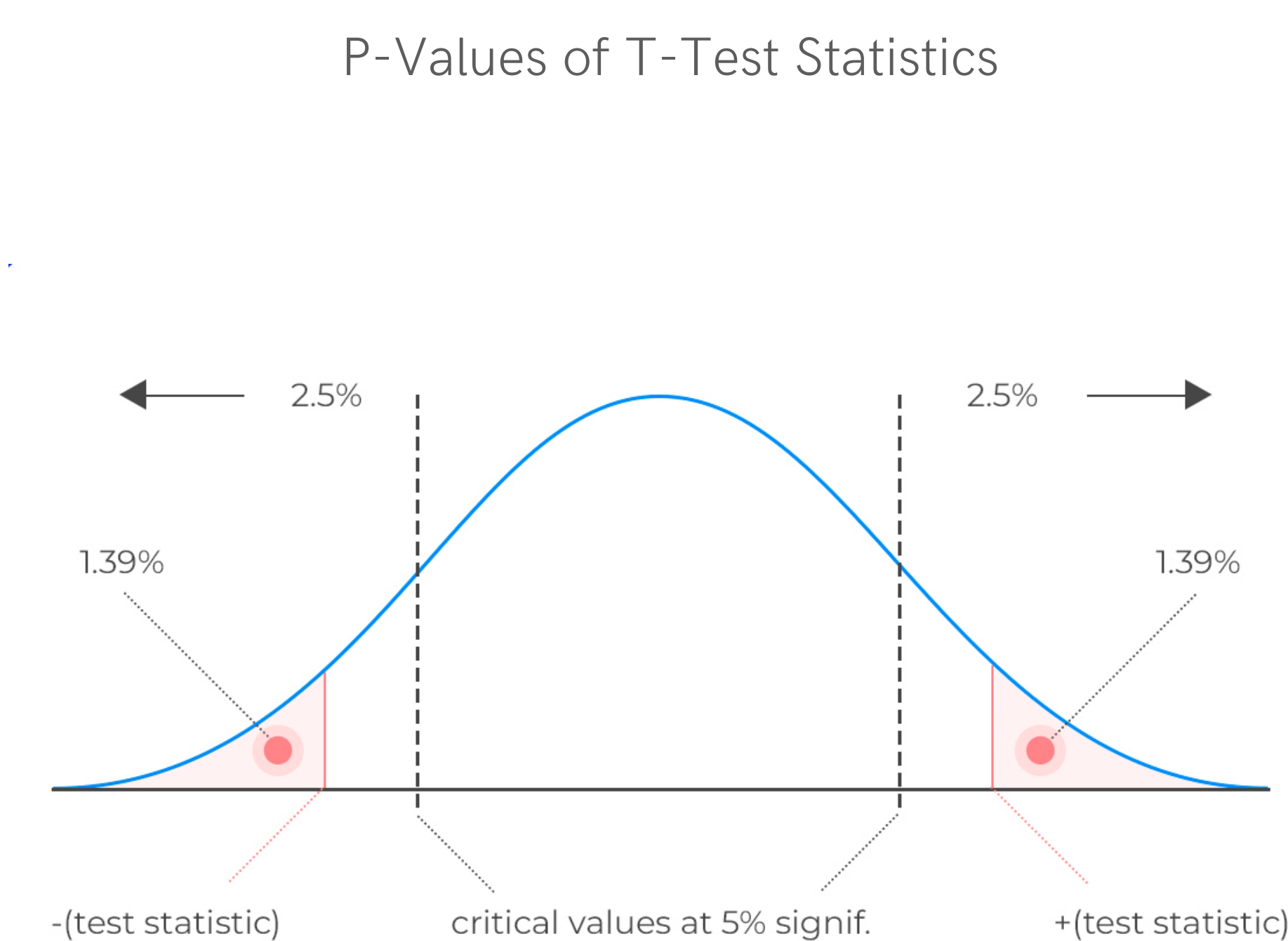
Applying this theory to eyewitness identification leads to my research question:

What is the effect of a majority group's judgment on bicultural Asians' ability to identify a criminal suspect, given that their visible minority status has been made salient?

Hypothesis: Bicultural children of immigrant participants would be more likely to conform to the decisions of the majority group in identifying a culprit when their visible minority status was made salient.

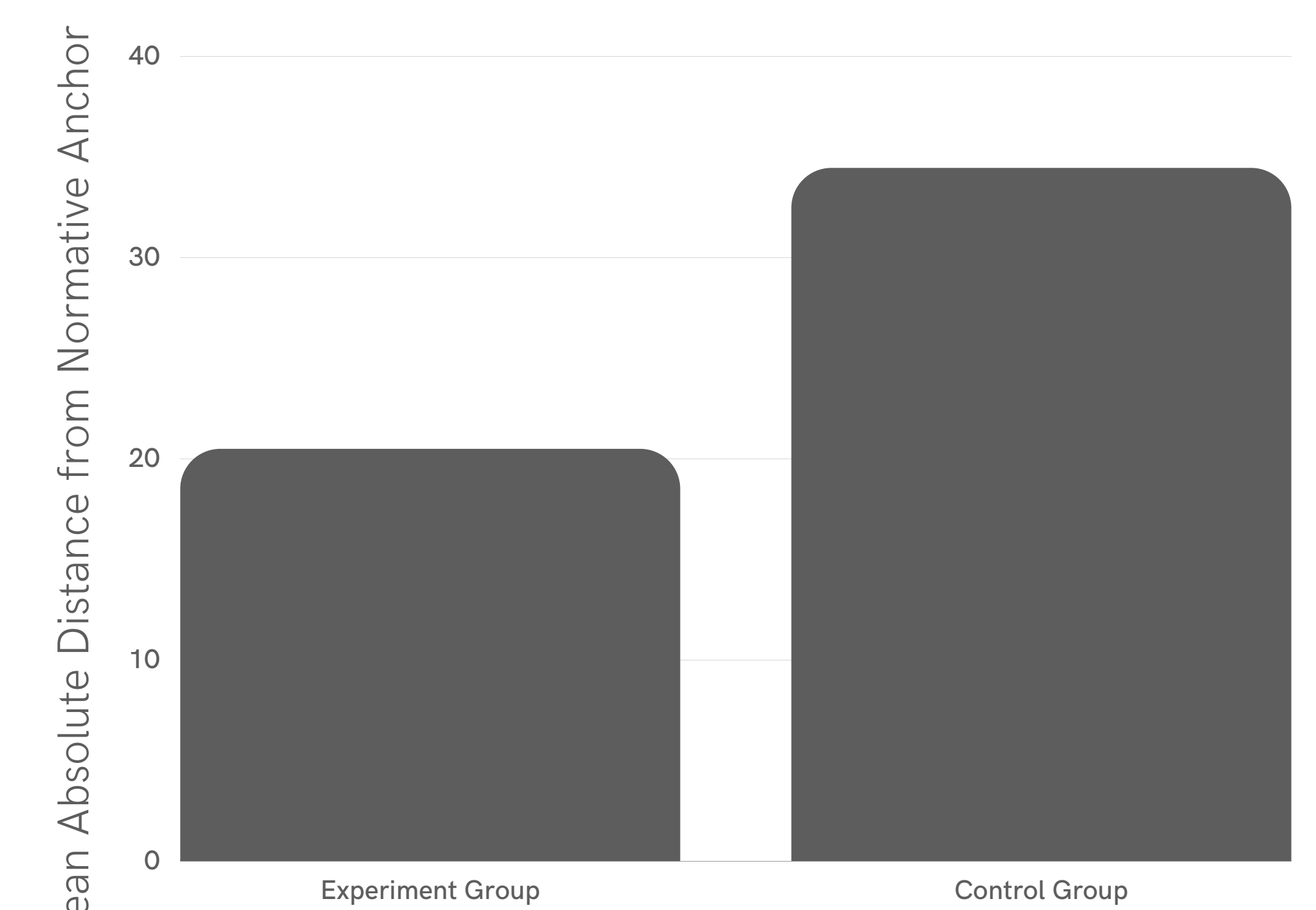
ANALYSIS

- The p-value of 0.00001337 which is significantly below the set alpha level of 0.05, suggests rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis. There exists a mean difference in absolute distance away from the anchor. In other words, participants who have been primed with heightened visible minority status are on average exhibiting greater conformity to the majority group rating.
- The observed effect size d is large, 0.79. This indicates that the magnitude of the difference between the average of mean distance away from the normative anchor in the control group and that of the experiment group is large.



The p-value is calculated to be 0.00001337, ($p(x \leq T) = 0.000006685$), meaning that the chance of type I error or rejecting a correct null hypothesis is as small as 0.0013%. The null hypothesis for this study is that there is no mean difference in absolute distance from anchor between control and experiment group.

Comparison of Mean in Experiment and Control Group



The absolute mean distance away from the anchor group for the experimental group is 20.49, and 34.46 for the control group. This means that on average, participants whose visible minority status is not heightened, drag 14.03 mm less away from the anchor, representing more conformity to the anchor's represented average decision of White-Americans

METHODOLOGY

- Recruited 130 participants (mean age = 29.70, years in Asia = 11.62, years in America = 18.51)
- Examined the relationship between a majority group's decision and a bicultural individual's ability to identify suspects when visible minority status was made more salient
- Used two-sample T-test for means
- Participants split into two conditions and were shown a video (Wells, 2004) of a bomber
- Asked to rate 2 sets of 30 faces to find the culprit.
- Rating's default anchor represents the average rating of White-Americans
- Measure: the absolute mean distance from the ranking anchor (smaller the number, greater conformity)

RESULTS/FINDINGS

-A majority group's judgement can significantly sway bicultural children of immigrants' own judgement pertaining to identifying suspects when their visible minority status has been primed.

This study corroborates with existing literature that highlights the rapid and spontaneous adoption of mainstream cultural beliefs, preferences, and practices by this segment of the population.

CONCLUSION

The results of the present study highlight the vulnerability of eyewitnesses to co-witness influence.

The implications of such findings highlight the need for investigators to identify whether eyewitnesses to the crime will have discussed the event with others prior to giving their statements—a procedure that has been recommended in previous research

Future direction:
Future studies may explore if race and ethnicity are more closely related to informational or normative influence.

Limitations:
Online study so cannot guarantee the ability to generalize to real-life police line-up procedures.

REFERENCES

- Tafarodi, R. W., Kang, S.-J., & Milne, A. B. (2002). When different becomes similar: Compensatory conformity in bicultural visible minorities. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28(8), 1131-1142. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461672022811011>
- Wells, G. L., Olson, E. A., & Charman, S. D. (2003). Distorted retrospective eyewitness reports as functions of feedback and delay. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 9(1), 42-52. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-898x.9.1.42>