



California Science Center  
**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR**  
**2001 PROJECT SUMMARY**

<b>Your Name</b> (List all student names if multiple authors.) <b>Rebecca D. Fink</b>	<b>Science Fair Use Only</b>  <h1 style="margin: 0;">J0210</h1>
<b>Project Title</b> (Limit: 120 characters. Those beyond 120 will be ignored. See pg. 9) <b>Accuracy of Eyewitness Identification</b>	<b>Division</b> <b>J Junior (6-8) J Senior (9-12)</b>
<b>Preferred Category</b> (See page 5 for descriptions.) <b>2 - Behavioral Sciences</b>	
<p><b>Abstract</b> (Include Objective, Methods, Results, Conclusion. See samples on page 14.)          Use no attachments. Only text inside these boxes will be used for category assignment or given to your judges.</p> <p><b>Introduction:</b> Identification of suspects involved in crimes is often based on eyewitness testimony. Eyewitnesses often choose the wrong suspect, so instead of the real criminal being identified, an innocent person is sent to jail. This is somewhat understandable, because most of the time the eyewitness is trying to focus on how to get out of the situation rather than on what the criminal looks like. Studies done on the accuracy of eyewitness testimony have been done using male suspects.</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> This science project was designed to test eyewitness testimony when a female #suspect# was involved in a crime.</p> <p><b>Material and Methods:</b> A crime was reenacted and video taped. The #eyewitness# test subjects watched the twenty second video and then filled out questionnaires about what they had observed. A mock photo line-up was also shown to see if they could accurately identify the #suspect.# One of the things being observed during the testing was to see if there was any connection between a male identifying a female versus a female identifying a female.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> The results collected from this study indicated that 46% of the eyewitnesses were able to accurately identify the correct suspect. Gender of the eyewitness did not seem to be significant in the accurate identification of the suspect because 49% of the male eyewitnesses correctly identified the female suspect while 43% of the female eyewitnesses correctly identified the female suspect. (It was decided a difference of less than 10% was not significant.) Also discovered in this study was that eyewitnesses# perceptions of the age, build, and clothing of the suspect were quite variable.</p> <p><b>Discussion:</b> These findings show that eyewitness accuracy isn#t very reliable, and eyewitness identification should be used extremely cautiously in the investigation and trial of real-life suspects in order to prevent innocent people from being convicted.</p>	
<b>Summary Statement</b> (In one sentence, state what your project is about.) This project tested accuracy of eyewitness identification, which was found to be only 46% of 137 #eyewitnesses.#	
<b>Help Received in Doing Project</b> (e.g. Mother helped type report; Neighbor helped wire board; Used lab equipment at university X under the supervision of Dr. Y; Participant in NSF Young Scholars Program) See Display Regulation #8 on page 4. Detective Rick Empson of the San Diego County Sheriff#s Department, for helping with questionnaire and photo line-up; Biostatistician Tricia Silva for helping with questionnaire database and data analysis; Supervising Criminalist Marty Fink for lining up subjects for testing; and teachers at Lewis Middle School for allowing testing in their classes.	