



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR  
2007 PROJECT SUMMARY**

<b>Name(s)</b> <b>Tanner J. Kelly</b>	<b>Project Number</b> <b>J0619</b>
<b>Project Title</b> <b>Through the Eye of a Witness: Eyewitness Accuracy in Children</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><b>Objectives/Goals</b> My experiments have determined the effect of witness confidence and clarity on accuracy. I also concluded the level of eyewitness accuracy when questioned using a questionnaire requiring only general descriptions versus a direct line of questioning asking specific questions. My study also determined how exposure time affects eyewitness accuracy. My study may alter the reliability of child eyewitnesses in the justice system, and may change the manner of questioning of child eyewitnesses by law enforcement.</p> <p><b>Methods/Materials</b> In the control test, over 100 test subjects, ranging in age from 12-14 were placed in a classroom test environment in sets of approximately 30, unaware that their accuracy as an eyewitness would be challenged. 1 of 3 uniquely clothed 12-year-old females would enter the test environment, with new test groups each time, in random order (to prevent descriptions of the suspect being communicated between subjects and polluting the test population). The suspect would enter the test environment and engage in mock argument with a teacher and exit after 15 seconds in the control and 30 seconds in the variable. Once the #suspect# had exited the test environment, subjects were informed of the nature of the study and after consenting, the subjects completed a general information questionnaire, requiring only volunteered answers to unspecific questions.</p> <p><b>Results</b> The results determined that teenage eyewitnesses are generally inaccurate. Exposure time had no effect upon the accuracy of the subject testimony in the interview. However, the questionnaires did show that the variable subjects were far more accurate than the control subjects. There was also no noticeable effect of clarity or confidence on accuracy.</p> <p><b>Conclusions/Discussion</b> Child eyewitnesses were proven to be largely inaccurate, proving part of my hypothesis correct. My belief that the variable test subjects would reach a greater level of accuracy over the control subjects was correct. However, there was no apparent difference in accuracy in the interviews, only in the questionnaires.</p>	
<b>Summary Statement</b> My study designed to understand the effect of witness confidence and clarity on accuracy in child eye witness accounts.	
<b>Help Received</b>	