



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2010 PROJECT SUMMARY**

Name(s) Michael F. Thompson	Project Number J0325
Project Title Your Lyin' Eyes: Do Individuals or Groups of People Make Better Eyewitnesses?	
Abstract Objectives/Goals My project measured the reliability of eyewitnesses and answered the question: Will you get more accurate information from eyewitnesses if you ask them individually about what they saw, or will you get more accurate information from a group of people? Methods/Materials I arranged for an incident to be staged in front of 174 unsuspecting subjects at a local college, obtained their informed consent and asked the subjects to complete a questionnaire about the incident. Some subjects responded as individuals, others as groups. I scored each response and calculated the number of right, wrong and no answers, then figured out the percentages and compared the results for individuals and groups. Results I was able to stage three incidents and collect data from 174 subjects. 59 subjects completed the questionnaire as individuals and 115 subjects were divided into 30 groups and responded as groups. Conclusions/Discussion --Eyewitnesses are not very reliable. On average, all subjects combined got just over 60% of the questions correct. That score would earn you a D- on a test at my school. They were unable to provide an answer or gave a wrong answer nearly 40% of the time. --Individuals are more reliable than groups because the groups gave more wrong answers. --Groups do better on appearance-related questions. Individuals do better on the substance of the incident. --All subjects made assumptions and reported them as facts. But groups were more likely to report assumptions as facts and less likely to say they didn't know an answer.	
Summary Statement My project measured the reliability of individuals versus groups as eyewitnesses.	
Help Received My mom contributed to my idea, Professor Clifford let me do my experiment in his classes, the subjects participated, my dad helped me set up the data tables and was the actor in the incident, and my parents drove me to the junior college to do the experiment.	