



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR  
2016 PROJECT SUMMARY**

<b>Name(s)</b> <b>Ethan R. McMullen</b>	<b>Project Number</b> <b>J0718</b>
<b>Project Title</b> <b>The Effectiveness of Eyewitness Reports in a Crime Scenario</b>	
<b>Abstract</b> <b>Objectives/Goals</b> The objective of this study is to determine if witnesses to a crime can accurately describe what they saw while their attention has been diverted elsewhere. <b>Methods/Materials</b> A recording device, 9 actors, Laptop computer with iMovie software, YouTube website, SurveyMonkey website. I recorded two videos of a crime scene, one distracted viewers attention away from the crime, the other had no distraction. I posted both videos on YouTube, then had fifty individuals watch each video and take a survey to determine accuracy of their recollections. <b>Results</b> Viewers answered questions incorrectly after watching the distracting video 55% of the time. The number of incorrect answers by viewers was reduced to 50% when the sound in the video was illuminated. Conclusions of this project indicate that if distractions are reduced recall improves slightly. <b>Conclusions/Discussion</b> Based on the results of this experiment, a distracted witness is not as reliable as a less distracted witness. However, a less distracted witness recalls information only 5% more accurately.	
<b>Summary Statement</b> I found that people could not accurately recall a crime scene occurring within their field of vision when their attention was focused on something else in the same field of vision.	
<b>Help Received</b> The only assistance I received was from friends and family who participated in helping me film and participate in the videos and in taking the online survey.	