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SCIENCE

Notebook

A team of psychologists led by Gary L. Wells at **Iowa State University** demonstrated that convincingly in an experiment described in a recent *Journal of Experimental Psychology*.

The researchers prepared a 60-second videotape purportedly showing a man on a roof dropping what appears to be a bomb down an air shaft. They showed the tape to 253 volunteers, who were then asked to pick out the bomber from six photographs. Unknown to the volunteer witnesses, a picture of the actor playing the bomber was not in the array. Nevertheless, every volunteer picked a suspect.

After making their choice, some were told they made the right choice, some told they made the wrong one, and some were told nothing. They were then asked how well they remembered what they saw in the video.

The people who were told they picked the right suspect had much greater confidence in virtually all aspects of their recollection, and 23 percent said they were at least 90 percent sure of details. Those given no feedback were much less confident, with only 2 percent saying they were at least 90 percent sure.

The researchers said the findings affirm the recommendation that police line-ups be "double-blind," with neither the witness nor the investigator accompanying the witness told whether the right suspect was chosen.

-- David Brown