



Eyewitness Testimony: With a New Preface

By Elizabeth F. Loftus

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Every year hundreds of defendants are convicted on little more than the say-so of a fellow citizen. Although psychologists have suspected for decades that an eyewitness can be highly unreliable, new evidence leaves no doubt that juries vastly overestimate the credibility of eyewitness accounts. It is a problem that the courts have yet to solve or face squarely.

In *Eyewitness Testimony*, Elizabeth Loftus makes the psychological case against the eyewitness. Beginning with the basics of eyewitness fallibility, such as poor viewing conditions, brief exposure, and stress, Loftus moves to more subtle factors, such as expectations, biases, and personal stereotypes, all of which can intervene to create erroneous reports. Loftus also shows that eyewitness memory is chronically inaccurate in surprising ways. An ingenious series of experiments reveals that memory can be radically altered by the way an eyewitness is questioned after the fact. New memories can be implanted and old ones unconsciously altered under interrogation.

These results have important implications for court reform, police interrogation methods, defense strategy, and many other aspects of criminal and civil procedure. *Eyewitness Testimony* is a powerful book that should be required reading for trial lawyers, social psychologists, and anyone who considers the chilling prospect of confronting an eyewitness accusation in a court of law.

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Eyewitness Testimony: With a New Preface By Elizabeth F. Loftus Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #137999 in Books
- Published on: 1996-03-15
- Released on: 1996-02-26
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.50" h x 6.25" w x .75" l, .86 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 272 pages



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Editorial Review

Review

An important book about a critical question. (*New York Times Book Review*)

Loftus is a quiet, sincere, and reliable guide to this important research and its applications. (*Times Higher Education Supplement*)

From the Back Cover

As pertinent today as when it was first published more than a decade ago, this engaging and highly praised study makes the psychological case against the reliability of the eyewitness. By shedding light on the many factors that can intervene and create inaccurate testimony, Elizabeth Loftus illustrates how memory can be radically altered by the way an eyewitness is questioned, and how new memories can be implanted and old ones altered in subtle ways. She thus calls into question today's widely held assumption of eyewitness authority over the details of a crime or other events. Eyewitness Testimony provides a sobering counterpoint to today's theatrical reliance on eyewitness accounts in the media, and should be required reading for trial lawyers, psychologists, jurors, and anyone who considers the chilling prospect of confronting an eyewitness accusation in a court of law.

About the Author

Elizabeth F. Loftus is a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Psychology and Social Behavior at the University of California, Irvine.

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