The admissibility of expert psychological testimony on eyewitness matters is currently in debate. In this research we bring data to bear on some of the critical issues underlying the debate, specifically, jurors' understanding and use of expert testimony. Mock jurors viewed a realistic videotaped trial centered around eyewitness evidence. Several aspects of the evidence and the presence of expert testimony were varied orthogonally. Results showed that the presence of expert testimony improved juror sensitivity to eyewitness evidence. In comparison to jurors who heard no expert testimony, jurors who heard expert testimony gave more weight to witnessing and identification conditions and less weight to witness confidence when evaluating the accuracy of the identification. The expert testimony did not cause jurors to be more skeptical of the eyewitness evidence.

Insofar as identification procedures are fair, mistaken identifications per se are not to blame for injustice, for it is not the eyewitness who convicts the innocent suspect; it is the judge or the jury. The United States criminal justice system is designed, in theory, to prevent false convictions resulting from mistaken identification through the use of corroborative evidence and rigorous cross-examination. But given that police, attorneys, and jurists are not fully knowledgeable about witnessing and identification factors that are likely to produce false identifications (Brigham & Bothwell, 1983; Brigham & Wolfskiel, 1983; Deffen-
bacher & Loftus, 1982; Noon & Hollin, 1987), their ability to scrutinize eyewitness evidence is in doubt, and hence the effectiveness of legal safeguards remains in question (Walters, 1985).

In light of the shortcomings of traditional safeguards, attorneys have turned to the use of expert psychological testimony to educate the jury about memory processes and factors that potentially influence an eyewitness's memory. Expert psychological testimony about eyewitness memory differs importantly from expert clinical or psychiatric testimony. The expert clinical psychologist or psychiatrist is commonly called upon to give an opinion about the mental state or credibility of a witness. The eyewitness expert, in accordance with Rule 702 of the Federal Rules of Evidence (see People v. McDonald, 1984; State v. Chapple, 1983; Loftus, 1986b) explains to the jury basic memory processes and describes eyewitness identification experiments and results. In addition the eyewitness expert discusses factors in the case that might have influenced the witness's memory. The testimony of the eyewitness expert is more analogous to judicial commentary than to clinical or psychiatric testimony.

Should expert testimony on eyewitness memory be admitted in court? This question has raised considerable debate (see the June, 1986, issue of Law and Human Behavior). The appropriateness of expert psychological testimony has been addressed on a variety of levels. Goldman (1986) and others (Bermant, 1986; Bersoff, 1986; Buckhout, 1986; Hastie, 1986; Lempert, 1986; Loftus, 1986a; Woocher, 1986) address the question of how the morality and legality of expert psychological testimony should be assessed. Loftus (1986a), Lempert (1986), Hastie (1986), and Goldman (1986) discuss the appropriate role of the expert. These are essentially issues of policy and ethics. A substantial portion of the debate (Kargon, 1986; Konecni & Ebbesen, 1986; McCloskey, Egeth, & McKenna, 1986; Wells, 1986; Yarmey, 1986) centers around the empirical question of what effect expert testimony has on jury decision making.

Plausible Effects of Expert Testimony

Hypotheses about the effects of expert testimony can be classified into three categories: juror confusion, juror sensitivity, and juror skepticism. Concerns over and hypotheses regarding each of these plausible effects are described below.

Juror Confusion

Rule 403 of the Federal Rules of Evidence states that the expert testimony should not be admitted if it is likely to prejudice, mislead, or confuse the jury. McCloskey et al. (1986) are concerned that "the testimony will affect the jury in some unanticipated and undesirable way. Jurors may misinterpret, overgeneralize, or misapply the information presented by the psychologist, and so may come to unwarranted conclusions" (p. 6). This concern seems entirely appropriate given that numerous studies have demonstrated that jurors have difficulty in understanding and applying legal concepts at virtually every stage of the trial process (Buchanan, Pryor, Taylor, & Strawn, 1978; Charrow & Charrow, 1979;