



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR  
2010 PROJECT SUMMARY**

<b>Name(s)</b> Addie McNamara	<b>Project Number</b> <b>J0318</b>
<b>Project Title</b> <b>What Is the Effect of an Authoritative Figure on Different Age Groups?</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><b>Objectives/Goals</b> The purpose of this experiment was to investigate how different age groups would react to an authoritative presenter versus a non-authoritative presenter. When given a speech with some clearly false information, would subjects rate the accuracy of the information higher when it was presented by an authoritative figure? Based on background research, my hypothesis was that pre-teens (10-12) and adults (30+) would believe both figures equally while teenagers (13-19) would favor the authoritative presenter.</p> <p><b>Methods/Materials</b> This project involved about 25 people in three different age groups as well as an authoritative presenter (adult, well-dressed, confident) and a non-authoritative presenter (child, casually dressed, hesitant). The presenters read a speech with about half of the information being clearly false to two different test groups. The subjects were then given a questionnaire that asked them to rate their belief in the accuracy of the presenter's information.</p> <p><b>Results</b> The data showed that belief in the accuracy of the authoritative presenter decreased as the age of the subjects increased, most likely due to the subject's greater knowledge of the material. The pre-teens highly favored the authoritative presenter and did not favor the non-authoritative presenter. The teenagers believed both figures equally. The adults strongly disbelieved the non-authoritative presenter. The results were roughly the same for male and female subjects.</p> <p><b>Conclusions/Discussion</b> My hypothesis was not supported by my data. The data showed that the belief in accuracy of an authoritative presenter decreased with age. It also showed that pre-teens and adults favored the authoritative figure over the non-authoritative figure while teenagers believed both figures equally.</p>	
<b>Summary Statement</b> This project investigates how age can affect reactions to an authoritative figure versus a non-authoritative figure.	
<b>Help Received</b> Parents were authoritative figures, little sister was non-authoritative figure, brother assisted in drafting speeches about Japan and Korea to read to subjects, friends / volunteers were test subjects.	