



# CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2017 PROJECT SUMMARY

<b>Name(s)</b> <b>Sophia X. Epley</b>	<b>Project Number</b> <b>J0407</b>
<b>Project Title</b> <b>Race, Socioeconomic Status, and 5th Grade Students' Attitudes toward Police Officers, Doctors, Firefighters and Teachers</b>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><b>Objectives/Goals</b> My objective was to determine whether fifth grade students, regardless of socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic backgrounds will have uniformly positive opinions of the likeability and trustworthiness of teachers, doctors and firefighters, but whether those from low socioeconomic status schools will have more negative opinions of law enforcement officers than those from high socioeconomic status schools and whether those from non-White backgrounds will have more negative opinions of police officers than White students.</p> <p><b>Methods/Materials</b> Questionnaires as to perception of police officers, teachers, doctors and firefighters. 367 fifth grade students from six public elementary schools (of diverse socioeconomic status) in San Diego County.</p> <p><b>Results</b> Students who identified themselves as being solely or partially a member of a racial/ethnic minority group had a more negative perception of police officers than of doctors and firefighters than those students who identified as solely being White. They also had more negative feelings towards teachers. The average scores for racial/ethnic minorities as to the likeability and trustworthiness of police officers and teachers were consistently lower than the average scores of White students across all six schools as well as in each individual school. Minority students scored the likeability and trustworthiness of doctors and firefighters higher than White students, demonstrating an even larger difference between minority and White children's perceptions of police officers compared to other helping professions. Similarly, students from the low socioeconomic status schools scored police officers on average lower than those from the high socioeconomic status schools and scored teachers lower and doctors and firefighters higher than their high socioeconomic status counterparts.</p> <p><b>Conclusions/Discussion</b> With continuing discussions in our country about the relationship between law enforcement officers and minority communities, these findings suggest that efforts to improve those relations should be directed at even very young children. Young children do not harbor uniformly naïve and benign perceptions of helping professions but develop attitudes toward police officers, teachers, firefighters and doctors that are affected by their race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status; these novel findings have significant implications for important public policy issues.</p>	
<b>Summary Statement</b> Testing of 367 fifth graders from six schools showed that minority race/ethnicity and low socioeconomic status are correlated with more negative attitudes toward police and teachers, and more positive perceptions of doctors and firefighters	
<b>Help Received</b> I designed the questionnaire and made all the mathematical calculations by myself but I consulted with Sergio Ramos, engineer, and Gary Remiker, mathematics teacher, regarding the mathematical analysis.	