



CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2017 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s) Hannah C. Valencia	Project Number J0423
Project Title True Colors: A Study of Implicit Bias	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals Race relations have always been a difficult and sometimes painful topic to discuss in America. In the recent presidential elections, racial biases and attitudes seemed to be a major factor, something I found very discouraging. It was in this environment that I sought to better understand the way people of different races see each other. I wanted to determine whether children nowadays typecast others because of their skin tones, whether these attitudes change as they get older, and will gender affect their viewpoints. My experiment is based on a landmark study carried out by Kenneth and Mamie Clark in the 1940s. They found that people exhibited implicit bias in how they judged others based on skin color.</p> <p>Methods/Materials I showed students, in grades Kinder through 8th, pictures of girls that were identical in everything but skin color. Participants were asked which characters were prettiest or least pretty, smartest or least smart, good or bad, which skin color they themselves had, and which color they would prefer. I organized the data by grade, gender, and what skin color the participants associated themselves with.</p> <p>Results Most students showed a preference to lighter skin tones in general. Forty-six percent chose the lighter skin tones as the prettiest and 35% as nicest. They judged the dark-skinned figures as least pretty, 34%, and bad, 36%. Twenty-six percent of the children classified the medium skin tone as the smartest while 26% chose the lightest skin tone as not smart. Boys tended to ascribe positive traits to fairer skin. Girls tended to ascribe positive traits to fairer skin in all categories except intelligence. Girls seemed to ascribe intelligence more to the medium skin colors. In the higher grades, students were more hesitant to judge character and qualities based on skin color alone. Majority of the participants were comfortable with their own skin tone.</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion My data shows that within my study population, kids of today still show traces of implicit bias. We should acknowledge such biases so we can be more aware of factors that affect our attitudes and actions. My data shows that children today, as compared to subjects in the 1940s, are more conscious of these prejudgments. We are slowly learning how to judge others not merely by the color of their skin.</p>	
Summary Statement I sought to find if children of today are affected by implicit bias, that is, ascribing prejudgments about attractiveness, intelligence, and character stereotypes to people of different skin colors.	
Help Received Teachers at St. Edward School and my parents assisted me in obtaining parent signatures on the Human Informed Consent forms. My father introduced me to a video that led to my interest in the Clark doll experiments. My mother helped me in creating graphs in Excel.	