



CALIFORNIA SCIENCE & ENGINEERING FAIR 2019 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s) Michelle Bryant	Project Number J0402
Project Title Children Value Something More If They Worked for It	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives In order to determine whether children value something more if they worked for it, I studied whether children would rather keep something they earned or an identical item they received as an unearned gift, and their reasons why.</p> <p>Methods Third and fourth grade children did exercises to earn materials to make a beaded keychain out of pipe cleaners, plastic beads and key rings with clasps. My helpers made an exact replica of each child's keychain and gave it to the subject as an unearned gift. Subjects had to surrender either the keychain they earned or the one they were given and tell me the reason.</p> <p>Results I found a very statistically significant preference for keeping the earned keychain among all 44 test subjects (P value 0.007) and among the 20 boys (P value 0.002), but not among the 24 girls (P value 0.4). For most people who kept the earned keychain, the deciding factor was the effort involved. One third of the girls and none of the boys kept the gifted keychain because of gratitude.</p> <p>Conclusions Children value their own work. Most children value an object they earn more than an unearned object because they value their own effort and accomplishment. When a child really wants a toy, parents should make them work for it so they value it more. That a third of girls and zero boys kept the gifted keychain out of gratitude was a surprising gender difference and suggests that a portion of girls have a prosocial, altruistic focus in prioritizing thankfulness. These results may also reflect the culture of gratitude at my school. I did not find any earned vs. given experiments like this in the literature.</p>	
Summary Statement I predicted correctly that most children value something they earn more than an identical item they receive as an unearned gift.	
Help Received My science teacher Debbie Culley, the four teachers who let me test their classes at SFC, my four 7th grade helpers, and my parents	