



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR  
2004 PROJECT SUMMARY**

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| <b>Name(s)</b><br>Madeleine S. Burnette-McGrath   | <b>Project Number</b><br><b>J1702</b> |
| <b>Project Title</b><br><b>Poky Parking: Does It Take Longer to Vacate a Parking Spot When Someone Is Waiting? Perception vs. Reality</b>   |                                       |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><b>Objectives/Goals</b><br/>To determine: (1) PERCEPTIONS -- (a) if people think OTHERS take longer to leave parking spots when they wait, and (b) if they think THEY themselves take longer to leave when others wait, and (2) REALITY -- whether it really takes longer for a car to leave a parking spot when someone is waiting.</p> <p><b>Methods/Materials</b><br/>(1) MEASURED PERCEPTION: Wrote and administered three different types of surveys to a total of 300 licensed drivers. Methods included: multiple-choice and open-ended questions, varied the order of choices, used single-subject surveys. (2) OBSERVED REALITY: Observed 400 parking situations (200 no waiting; 200 waiting) in 10 parking lots. Recorded time on log sheets, from when driver first touched the car until vacated spot. Recorded other variables: driver's gender, loading packages, number of passengers, helping babies/toddlers.</p> <p><b>Results</b><br/>(1) PERCEPTION: (a) Perception-of-Others: 39.5% of survey Respondents think others take LONGER, 39.5% think the same time, 21% think others leave faster when they wait. (b) Self-Perception: a mere 2.5% think they take LONGER, 25.5% think the same time, and a 72% think they leave faster when others wait. (2) REALITY: It takes a car an extra 11.1 mean seconds (19.9% longer) to leave a parking space if someone is waiting. That result is true of both men and women, regardless of number of passengers, loading of packages, or babies/toddlers. Perceptions, especially self-perceptions, do not match reality.</p> <p><b>Conclusions/Discussion</b><br/>People think they and others try to rush in parking lots, but it really takes longer for a car to leave when someone is waiting. This subject affects millions of people a day who park in parking lots, and it shows that a common perception is incorrect. This experiment reveals information we cannot find elsewhere in available publications, so it is providing new knowledge. With these results, we can take the next scientific step to explain WHY it takes extra time. We could also use the results to teach people to be more patient in parking situations.</p> |                                       |
| <b>Summary Statement</b><br>People generally PERCEIVE that it takes the same or less time, but it REALLY takes LONGER, for a car to vacate a parking spot when someone is waiting.  |                                       |
| <b>Help Received</b><br>Moorpark College students (282) and neighbors (12) took my surveys; mother helped type report and drove me to parking lots; two psychologists suggested ways I might find previous research on subject.   |                                       |