



**CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR
2012 PROJECT SUMMARY**

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Project Title Understanding or Clever? Two Studies on Gender Stereotypes	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals The purpose of the project was to determine if fifth and sixth grade students display gender stereotypes towards babies and teachers.</p> <p>Methods/Materials Study 1 examined gender stereotypes about babies. Fifty-four participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: girl baby, boy baby, or gender neutral baby. First the survey presented a biography of a baby in which the names and pronouns were changed to coincide with the assigned condition. Next, participants were given 14 possible traits (5 warm, 5 competent, 4 other) and were instructed to select 5 traits that best describe the baby. Study 2 examined gender stereotypes about teachers. Fifty-four participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: female teacher, male teacher, or gender neutral teacher. First the survey presented a biography of the teacher in which the names and pronouns were changed to coincide with the assigned condition. Next, the participants were asked to respond to four questions about how they think the teacher would be in terms of personality and behavior in the classroom (relating to warmth and competence).</p> <p>Results The hypothesis for the first study was supported. Participants in the girl baby condition selected more warm traits (than was selected by those in the boy condition) and participants in the boy baby condition selected, on average, more competent traits to describe the baby (than was selected by those in the girl condition). However, our second study's hypothesis was not fully supported. Consistent with our hypothesis, the female teacher was rated higher in terms of warmth, but contrary to our predictions, the female teacher was also rated higher in mathematic skills and confidence, and lower in the likelihood to allow make-up assignments.</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion The Study 1 results supported our hypothesis. This finding suggests 5th and 6th graders make gender stereotypes about others as young as babies. Our Study 2 results are not as straight forward because the female teacher was rated as more warm, better at math, more confident and more strict than the male teacher. However, teachers are predominately female and this finding may be due to "occupational stereotyping." This suggests 5th and 6th graders make assumptions based on gender however not in a way that is consistent with the typical gender stereotype (of women being warm and men being competent).</p>	
Summary Statement This project uses an experimental design to examine how fifth and sixth graders make assumptions about babies and teachers' personalities and behaviors based on their gender.	
Help Received Elementary school teachers assisted in recruiting participants.	