

## Introduction

- Adults often adhere to a norm of reciprocity: If someone gives something to us, we feel obligated to return the favor, often with something of similar value.
- Our instinct to give back is thought to have played an important role in the development of human culture—enabling cooperation, the division of labor, and smooth social exchange (Cialdini, 2006).
- Preschoolers understand explicit agreements to reciprocate: When two characters agree to trade toys, children expect both to hold up their end of the bargain (Harris et al., 2001).
- They are also more likely to direct a protagonist to share resources with dolls who have previously shared with the protagonist than dolls who have previously shared with someone else (Olson & Spelke, 2008).
- Here, we focused on the nature of the reciprocal act, asking whether 4- and 5-year-olds ( $N = 57$ ) expect recipients to return favors in kind even when there has not been an explicit agreement to do so.

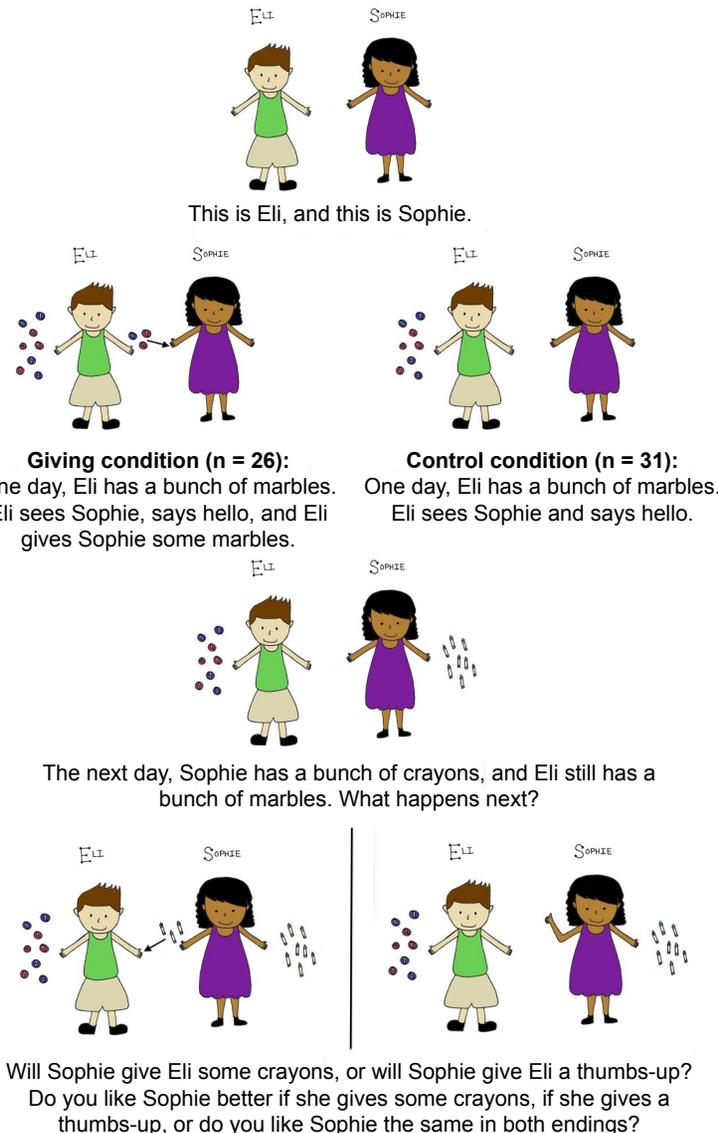
## References

- Cialdini, R. B. (2006). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion*. NY: Harper Business.
- Harris, P. L., Nunez, M., & Brett, C. (2001). Let's swap: Early understanding of social exchange by British and Nepali children. *Memory & Cognition*, 29, 757-764.
- Olson, K. R., & Spelke, E. S. (2008). Foundations of cooperation in young children. *Cognition*, 108, 222-231.

## Acknowledgments

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## Method: 4 trials as below



This is Eli, and this is Sophie.

**Giving condition (n = 26):**  
One day, Eli has a bunch of marbles. Eli sees Sophie, says hello, and Eli gives Sophie some marbles.

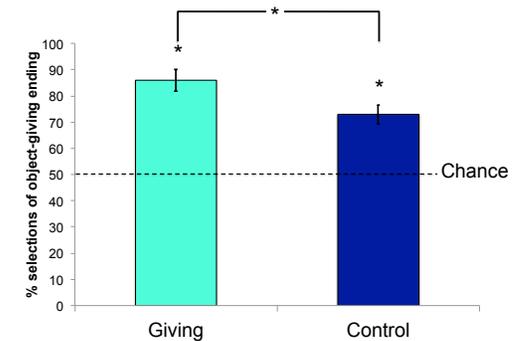
**Control condition (n = 31):**  
One day, Eli has a bunch of marbles. Eli sees Sophie and says hello.

The next day, Sophie has a bunch of crayons, and Eli still has a bunch of marbles. What happens next?

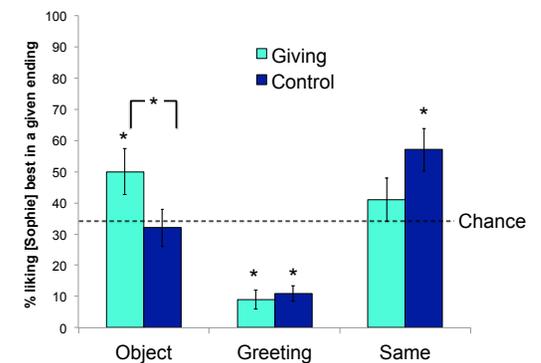
Will Sophie give Eli some crayons, or will Sophie give Eli a thumbs-up?  
Do you like Sophie better if she gives some crayons, if she gives a thumbs-up, or do you like Sophie the same in both endings?

## Results

- Children in both conditions favored the ending involving object-giving over the one involving a positive greeting. But those in the Giving condition did so more often.



- Children in the Giving condition liked [Sophie] best in the object-giving ending; those in the Control condition liked [Sophie] the same in the object-giving and greeting endings.



- Preschoolers expect recipients to reciprocate in kind, and like them better when they do so.