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Summary of Studies Showing that Giving Someone Even a Small Gift or Doing Even a Small Favour for Them Will Influence Their Decisions, and Larger Gifts and Favours Have More Influence

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Clinical studies worldwide in many countries and cultures have all shown that the most effective way to influence someone's decisions is to give them a gift or do them a favour – even small gifts and favours have influence, and larger gifts and favours have more influence.

The gift or favour creates an subconscious feeling in the person receiving it to be biased in favour of the person or entity that gave the gift or favour, to feel like they should do something for the person or entity in return. The technical term for this favour-trading is called “reciprocation”.

The “reciprocation” effect of receiving gifts and doing favours is summarized in the article by Alix Spiegel, “Give And Take: How The Rule Of Reciprocation Binds Us,” (NPR.org, November 26, 2012). [Click here](#) to see the article.

How even a small gift or favour influences the decisions of the person receiving the gift or favour, and all the studies showing this effect, is also summarized in the following articles and videos, and other academic articles:

1. Robert Cialdini and Steve Martin, Science of Persuasion. [Click here](#) to watch this video.
2. Robert Cialdini and Noah Goldstein, “The Science and Practice of Persuasion,” (2002) 43(2) *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly* 40 at 44. [Click here](#) to see this article.
3. Robert Cialdini, “The Science of Persuasion,” online: (2007) 14(1) *Scientific American* 70. [Click here](#) to see this article.
4. Adam Graycar and David Jancsics, “Gift Giving and Corruption,” online: (2017) *International Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 40(12) 1013. [Click here](#) to see this article.

One set of studies examined the impact of gifts from pharmaceutical companies on doctors' prescribing or drug support practices and concluded that "accepting gifts or inducements from industry influences and likely undermines a physician's independent clinical judgment, even where the physician believes otherwise."¹ Further, accepting funding changes evaluations of the safety of drugs.² Based on the results of the studies, the College of Physicians and Surgeons enacted a policy in 2014 that states: "Physicians must not accept personal gifts of any value from industry or industry representatives."

Another leading study shows that the size of the gift only increases the influence, but when participants were asked if they thought the gift they received affected their judgement all of them answered "absolutely not." Participants in the study were shown slides of paintings while they were in an MRI machine that was scanning their brain activity. The slides were marked in one corner with the logo of one of two art galleries, and the participants had been told that one or the other gallery was paying for their participation in the study. Not only did the participants like the paintings from their sponsoring gallery more, their brain scans showed that the parts of their brains that are related to pleasure were more active whenever their sponsoring gallery's logo was on the screen. Some participants were told that their sponsoring gallery was paying them \$30, others \$100 and others \$300. The participants' favouritism toward the paintings linked with their sponsoring gallery increased with the amount of the payment.³

Dan Ariely, a leading behavioural psychologist, has concluded that lobbyists, more than any other profession, "spend a lot of time and money trying to engender a feeling of obligation in others" – namely politicians "who they hope will repay them by voting with their interest in mind."⁴ As a result, he concludes that, to prevent conflicts of interest, gifts from lobbyists must be prohibited.⁵

¹ College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, "Physicians' Relationships with Industry: Practice, Education and Research," (2014), online: (2014) Policy #2-14, Footnote 1 <http://www.cpso.on.ca/Policies-Publications/Policy/Physicians-Relationships-with-Industry>; C.B. Sufrin and J.S. Ross, "Pharmaceutical industry marketing: understanding its impact on women's health," (2008) 63(9) *Obstet Gynecol Surv.* 585. Dana Katz, Arthur L. Caplan and Jon F. Merz, "All Gifts Large and Small: Toward an Understanding of the Ethics of Pharmaceutical Industry Gift-Giving," online: (2010 (originally 2003)) 10:10 *The American Journal of Bioethics* 11 <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15265161.2010.519226?src=recsys>.

² Robert Cialdini, "The Science of Persuasion," online: (2007) 14(1) *Scientific American* 70 https://www.influenceatwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/SAM_Reprint.pdf.

³ Ann H. Harvey; Ulrich Kirk; George H. Denfield and P. Read Montague, "Monetary favors and their influence on neural responses and revealed preference," (2010) 30(28) *The Journal of Neuroscience* 9597.

⁴ Dan Ariely, *The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone – Especially Ourselves* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013) at 77-78.

⁵ Dan Ariely, *The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty: How We Lie to Everyone – Especially Ourselves* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013) at 94.