

Article assignment

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Running Head: 121 ARTICLE ASSIGNMENT 121 Article Assignment: “ Effect on Restaurant Tipping of Male and Female Servers Drawing a Happy, Smiling Face on the Backs of Customers’ Checks”

by

Bruce Rind & Prashant Bordia

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121 Article Assignment:

“ Effect on Restaurant Tipping of Male and Female Servers Drawing a Happy, Smiling Face on the Backs of Customers’ Checks”

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1. What was the goal of the research (i. e., what issue(s) were they examining?)

The researchers were examining the difference that a smiley face on a customer’s check would make in regards to the amount that customer would tip the server, as well as the difference between a male or female server using the smiley face. Their goal was to test their hypothesis that a female using a smiley face would make more tips than a male using one. The implied stereotype being that a female using a smiley face is more acceptable than a male.

2. What were the independent and dependent variables? Make explicit which is which. (Note: there might be more than one of each.)

In this study the independent variables are (1) the inclusion or the non-
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inclusion of a smiley face on the customer's checks and (2) the gender of the server. The dependent variable is the amount of the tip when the check is presented either with or without a smiley face and from which gender server. There was also another independent variable that was taken into account, the size of the party as it correlated to the dependent variable of the amount of tip.

3. Who were the participants and how many were there?

The participants were 193 lunch customers at an upscale restaurant in Philadelphia. There were a total of 89 dining parties with a mean of 2.17 customers per party. Also involved were 2 accomplices to the study, one male and one female server.

4. Briefly describe the procedure in your own words (make sure that you include all of the important steps involved).

The research was conducted over a three day period during lunch as described above. The servers randomized their use of a smiley face by pulling from a stack of 50 index cards the researchers had given them, half with smiley faces on them. This would prompt them to put a smiley (or not) on the check dependent on which card they drew. The server would then deliver the check by placing it on the table back side up so that the entire party would be able to see the check. They were told to present the check with the same statement, "Here's your check" each time and to maintain a neutral facial expression so as not to bias the results. After the party left the server would put all the information on the index card they drew for that party.

5. Describe the results of the study in your own words. (Note, you should be able to do this by reading the discussion section of the paper, don't worry

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about trying to understand the results section.)

The results appeared to have confirmed the researcher's hypothesis and that the male server made less than the female server when putting a smiley face on the check. However, the control group, those customers that did not get a happy face, also showed that the male server made less than the female server as well. Significantly here the male made much less with a happy face on than with a happy face off.

6. How do the researchers explain their results (i. e., what do they determine is the cause of, or reason for (psychologically), the results)?

The researchers surmise that for female servers it is not unusual or them to draw a smiley face on their checks, so there would be nothing abnormal from a standard perception of the service. Drawing this face also lends itself to a feeling of friendliness between the server and customer thereby increasing tips. They project that if the server had put a smiley face on all checks she would have increased her overall tips by 19%.

For male servers the opposite seemed to have happened. It is uncommon for male servers to use a smiley face on checks so customer may have been taken aback. Instead of getting the feeling of friendliness as generated by the female server, the customers may have felt this action strange or weird. This confirmed for them that a gender stereotype exist in regards to expressive behavior.

7. What are some problems that you can identify with the study (i. e., problems beyond the ones the researchers state in the article)?

There may have been some bias for time of day, using lunch as their testing ground. People are a bit more hurried and groups that are out for dinner usually stay longer and tip better because of it. They may even form more of

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a relationship with the server that could overcome some of the gender bias exhibited here.

8. If you were to examine this issue, how would you change the study to fix the problems you stated in #7?

Certainly conduct another session of tests over the dinner hour to see if there is any difference in the results.

9. What area of psychology would this research fall under and why would you classify it under that area? (i. e. neuro, developmental, abnormal, cognitive, social, personality... etc.) 1 mark

The study mainly concerned itself with social/cultural psychology as well as social economics. The study was directly related to gender stereotypes from a social and cultural perspective. The act of tipping is also related to social economics as well..

References

Bruce Rind, B and Bordia, P. (1996) “ Effect on Restaurant Tipping of Male and Female Servers Drawing a Happy, Smiling Face on the Backs of Customers’ Checks.” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 26(3), 218-225.