

# [The effects of an invasion of personal space in a public setting assignment](https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-an-invasion-of-personal-space-in-a-public-setting-assignment/)

The Effects of an Invasion of Personal Space in a Public Setting Social norms are a part of any culture. Each society constructs its own norms. In each society norms tell a person how it is normal to behave. If someone deviates from the norm they risk rejection by society. Azar (2004) theorizes that we follow social norms not only because of conformity but also because there are benefits for us as well. Some examples are the feeling of being kind and the feeling of impressing others. Every society has many norms with are followed without much thought.

By following these norms there is less risk of being ostracized by your society. A more specific norm is the norm of personal space which is an invisible bubble we put around our bodies and have a feeling of discomfort when someone intrudes on that space. There is evidence to show that personal space norms are learned and those norms are influenced by each society (Leibman 1970). For example, Americans like to keep a greater amount of space between them and another person than do people of some other countries like India. However, the relationship to the person does make a difference even in America.

It has been proven that it depends on the individual’s relationship with another person if they are bothered by an intrusion of their space. If one person knows the other person they are more likely to travel closer to them than they are a stranger (Matthews & Matlock 2011). Studies have also shown that attractiveness plays a role in how people react to an invasion of personal space. When the intruder is attractive more positive emotions are shown. The opposite is true with an unattractive person, there are more feelings of disgust and sadness (Banziger & Simmons 1984).

As previous studies show there are many different things that determine people’s reaction to an invasion of their personal space. We as humans have a strong desire to avoid invading someone’s personal space. When given a choice the majority of people decide to not invade someone’s personal space as opposed to invade it (Buchanan, Juhnke & Goldman 1976). Middlemist, Knowles & Matter (1976) found that arousal is increased as a man’s personal space is invaded while in a restroom. I think women might have a similar reaction. I believe they will react with a ense of discomfort and quickly try to remove themselves from the situation. The present experiment will seek to investigate the invasion of personal space by invading women’s personal space in two different places at a mall. Given the existing research, it is predicted that people will be quicker to walk away when their personal space is invaded than when there is an acceptable distance between them and another person. Method Participants A field study was conducted in a local mall primarily in the restroom and food court area. Subjects were studied at random from people at the mall on the particular day of the study.

There were about 30 female subjects who were all adults looking to be between the ages of 18 and 50. After noting each person’s reaction I informed them that I was doing a study about personal space for a research paper. Procedure The first half of the study was done in the women’s restroom not long after the mall opened so it was not as crowded. While there was one woman washing her hands I walked up and started washing my hand less than six inches away from her. I did this about 15 times and tried to do it when there was only one woman washing her hands. The second half of the study was conducted in the food court.

I waited about an hour between the first part of the experiment and the second part so that there was less of a chance the same people would be involved. As a person was ordering their food at one of the restaurants I went up and pretended to be trying to decide what I wanted to eat. Like the first part of the experiment I stood approximately six inches or closer to the subjects and I did this about 15 times. I also had a control condition. About five times in each of the first two settings I walked up next to a person and left a socially acceptable amount of space between myself and the subject.

In my experiment I used 2 feet away from the subject as the socially acceptable distance. I kept every other variable the same with the exception of informing them I was doing an experiment . Results My hypothesis was partially supported. There was a noticeable difference between the restroom experimental and restroom control group. While in the restroom the majority of women washed their hands faster when I was intruding into their personal space than when I did not. With the exception of two people every woman quickly finished washing their hands and walked away without looking back.

One woman rudely asked me to scoot over and the other took the time to wash her hands but gradually leaned farther away from me. For the food court group my hypothesis was not supported. The results from the food court were a little different from the restroom group although there was still a difference between the experimental food court and control food court groups. Since the women still had to wait to get the food they were not able to hurry and remove themselves from the situation. For the most part the women just continued to scoot over when I invaded their personal space.

A couple of them cleared their throats, gave me dirty looks, and/or asked me to move. I noticed they were more vocal and outspoken than the women in the restroom were. I believe this is because there was no immediate way out of the situation because they were in the process of getting food and could not just walk away. I also noticed that women who were by themselves were less likely to speak up than the ones that had one or two friends with them were. My own personal space is something I have a hard time with so I found myself feeling extremely awkward when I had to intentionally put myself in a stranger’s personal bubble.

However, it did get less awkward each time I went up to someone. I think I was just more comfortable after I did it a few times but still I was never completely comfortable. It may have affected the experiment if the subject noticed how awkward it was for me. Discussion There were many reasons I got the results I did. Personal space is a social norm that people in America are very protective of. People feel uncomfortable when their personal space is violated. From this experiment I noticed that women will react to a personal space violation because they do not like being uncomfortable in that way.

It is almost like an uncontrollable action to regain your comfortable level of personal space. References Azar, O. H. (2004). What sustains social norms and how they evolve? : The case of tipping. Journal Of Economic Behavior & Organization, 54(1), 49. doi: 10. 1016/j. jebo. 2003. 06. 001 Banziger, G. , & Simmons, R. (1984). Emotion, Attractiveness, and Interpersonal Space. Journal Of Social Psychology, 124(2), 255. doi: 10. 1080/00224545. 1984. 9922857 Buchanan, D. R. , Juhnke, R. , & Goldman, M. (1976). Violation of personal space as a function of sex. The Journal Of Social Psychology, 99(2), 187-192. oi: 10. 1080/00224545. 1976. 9924771 Leibman, M. (1970). The effects of sex and race norms on personal space. Environment And Behavior, 2(2), 208-246. doi: 10. 1177/001391657000200205 Matthews, J. L. , & Matlock, T. (2011). Understanding the link between spatial distance and social distance. Social Psychology, 42(3), 185-192. doi: 10. 1027/1864-9335/a000062 Middlemist, R. , Knowles, E. S. , & Matter, C. F. (1976). Personal space invasions in the lavatory: Suggestive evidence for arousal. Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology, 33(5), 541-546. doi: 10. 1037/0022-3514. 33. 5. 541