

How pro social courteous acts affect door holding



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This study examined how pro-social courteous acts affect further acts of politeness. It questioned whether pro-social courteous acts promote the initiative to be more polite. Prior research has shown that gender can influence the act of door holding in a naturalistic setting. This study observed males and females to see if the door was held for them and, in response, if they continued this behavior. Observations of 305 college aged participants found that males are more likely to carry out the continued behavior of door holding while females have a higher rate of holding the door when it was not held for them previously. Generally it was found that, regardless of gender, if the door was held for an individual, that individual is more likely to reciprocate the act.

Introduction

According to Baskerville, Kim, Johnson, et al. (2000), today's society focuses on taking care of ourselves with lack of regard for others. People seem to have lessened the performance of "random acts of kindness." Due to the rarity of these acts, people generally are hesitant to accept them. According to the article Reactions to Random Acts of Kindness, "promoters of human kindness believe that kindness begets kindness." This study is trying to determine if gender plays a role in how often kindness is reciprocated. Baskerville, Kim, Johnson, et al. defined random acts of kindness as "something one does for an unknown other that they hope will benefit that individual." Other studies have been done researching this question and have found various results.

In one study performed by Yoder, Houge, Newman, Metz and LaVigne (2002) found a strong correlation between male door holding and dating, but not in <https://assignbuster.com/how-pro-social-courteous-acts-affect-door-holding/>

everyday situations. While on a date, males are more likely to hold the door for their partner than in an everyday situation such as on a college campus. People hold doors based on gender-neutral, helpful, or benevolently sexist classification levels.

Door holding is thought to be a form of courting in heterosexual relationships; gender stereotypes contribute to this. It was concluded that 55.2% of women and only 44.8% of men held the door in an everyday context. Yoder's findings support the thesis of this study, which shows pro-social courteous acts affect door holding; courtesy defined as well-mannered behavior. It has also been seen that there has been a change in door holding patterns in the past twenty years due to societal transformations. This study predicts that men have a tendency to act more courteous than women in a situation regarding door holding in a public setting.

Expectancy violation is defined as one's preconceived view on what is socially acceptable in regards to polite behavior in public. According to Johnson and Lewis (2010) expectancy violation relates to swearing in the workplace. When a behavior is performed that does not agree with this preconceived view, it is deemed an expectancy violation.

Swearing in a public setting is known as an expectancy violation, as is not holding the door for someone when it was previously held for them.

However, swearing is frowned upon to a much higher degree. Not holding the door only affects the person the door was not held for, while swearing affects everyone in earshot. Expectancy violation depends upon cultural

acceptance and social norms. What one would expect for behavior is culturally based according to the standards of the society.

Researcher Gibbons (2008) relays that there are several important factors that play a role in politeness such as age, sex, and socio economic status. Politeness is refined behavior towards others. This study done in Japan suggests that women and children are most polite. The reason for this politeness is possibly due the expectancy for it because they have a lower socioeconomic status. It focuses on variations in politeness. How pro-social courteous acts affect politeness varies across cultures. The given study differs greatly than studies done in western societies. It is included to demonstrate how social norms differ among cultures around the world.

Moser and Corroyer (2001) compared door holding across gender and then across cities showing that, while there seemed to be no difference between sex in Paris (for who was holding the door or who was having the door held for them), people in a smaller French city were considerably less civil and high-density situations decreased the civility in both situations. Also, when they were exposed again to the politeness (the door was held for them) they were again returned to being polite.

Goldman, Florez and Fuller (1981) relay that a person may influenced by the actions of others around them regarding pro-social courteous acts. The study goes on to discuss that “ the norm of reciprocity states that people should help those who have helped them.” In contrast with this hypothesis, the study states that women are less polite than men.

There are many benefits to performing pro-social courteous acts. According to researchers Buchanan and Bardi (2010) altruistic behaviors promote a more positive outlook on life. Life fulfillment can be dramatically altered based upon the likelihood that one will perform an act of kindness. A study was performed where happiness was measured before and after these acts of kindness were performed. The experiments group, assigned these tasks of kindness, resulted in a significantly increased measure of happiness.

The hypothesis of this study expected to find that females, regardless of whether the door was held for them, are more likely to hold the door for the following person. The act of holding the door is characteristic of a pro-social courteous act. Door holding can be seen as a pro-social courteous act and can easily be observed in a naturalistic setting. Many variables can influence the probability that one will perform such an act. Gender and previously receiving this form of altruism are both factors that influence the reaction of the individual.

Method

The researchers performed a pilot study to find the best possible location to conduct research. Three different locations were observed over the course of three twenty-minute increments. These locations were the main entrance of the psychology building, Mahar Hall, the front entrance to the Campus Center and the side entrance to the Campus Center of SUNY Oswego. At the front entrance to the Campus Center, we observed seven males and eight females. Then, at the side entrance to the Campus Center we observed 21 males and 33 females. Finally, at Mahar Hall, we observed a total of five males and three females.

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Each person had his or her own role in the study. One held the outside door for pedestrians walking in. The second researcher will be standing in between the double doors, waiting to see if the person in turn holds the door for them. The third researcher will be recording each observation. After we choose the optimal location for our study, we will perform our experiment using the same techniques used in the pilot.

After conducting the pilot study, it was realized that it would be potentially problematic for the researchers to hold the door for the participants without their informed consent. It was then decided to make this study purely observational and just observe groups of participants walking in and out of sets of doors, still watching to see if the first person holds or does not hold the door for the second and if the second holds or does not hold the door for the third.

For the actual study, the side entrance to the Campus Center was chosen because it had the highest population density. The participants observed consisted of 139 male and 125 female college students. The participants were randomly observed by all three researchers involved in the study. Time was chosen based upon the large number of students entering and exiting the building between classes. All three researchers recorded the data on a premade table to better organize the information. The table consisted of two parts, [door held and not held]. There were two more columns for gender [male and female], each subcategorized into yes or no depending on whether they held the door.

Two studies were conducted. For the first study, observations were made for people holding the door open for a person entering the building. A third person followed, and it was observed if the door was held for them. All researchers were observing and collecting data. For the second study, the researchers observed the door deliberately not being held for the second person entering the building. It was observed if the third person entering the building had the door held for them or not. Again, all researchers were observing and recording the data. The data was then analyzed to determine a conclusion.

The statistical analysis that was used for this study was a two-way chi square analysis. A Between-Subjects design was used for this study. There were four categories including identification number, gender, hold/not hold and behavior.

Results

To test whether gender and pro-social acts each have an effect on door holding, a two-way chi-square test was performed and was significant on both accounts. In this study, the variables gender and door holding showed the results: $2(1, N= 305) = 4.94, p < .05$. The variables door holding and behavior were also statistically significant: $2(1, N= 305) = 11.064, p < .05$. The alpha level for this study is .05. Figures 1 and 2, shown below give a visual demonstration of the findings of this observational study.

Discussion

After the data was analyzed, it was determined that gender was statistically significant in regards to door holding as well as pro-social courteous acts.

Contrary to our prediction that women would be more likely to proceed with a pro-social courteous act, our results found that males are more likely to continue the act (males = 57.52%, females = 42.48%).

Whether the door is held or not appears to influence the reactive responses of participants. Interestingly, females are actually more likely to hold the door when the door was not held for them. However, when the door is held, males are significantly more likely to reciprocate the gesture.

The exact reasons for this are unknown, but there are assumptions that can be drawn from this behavior. For instance, the environment that the individual was raised in could have an effect. Males are often taught to hold the door for others, whereas in past times, it was a general practice that females would have the door held for them. In a dating situation, Males are strongly encouraged to hold the door for their partner. In a study done by Yoder, men were found to hold the door two out of three times. According to that study, the act of door holding differs upon societal views on “male dominance and female passivity” (2002). These stereotypes exist because of platforms such as the media, social norms and environment.

In future observations, status can become a focus of the study. Status, defined by the setting, may play a significant role. For instance, in an educational setting, professors compared to college students would be conditions of the study. Age could also be taken into account by comparing across age groups and looking for a significant difference. Also, disability could be looked at to see if people are more likely to hold the door for such

individuals. Finally, other cultures may show a significant resulting difference in the data.

Further research would benefit this topic because there has not been a considerable amount of previous research. A suggestion for these researchers could be to have a control group and thereby conduct an experiment rather than an observation. One group could be directly manipulated by the researchers and given guidance on socially courteous acts. The other group could consist of people who have not been given the same guidance. All of these people would be randomly selected among the population.