

The Effect of Smiling on Helping Behavior: Smiling and Good Samaritan Behavior

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Research has shown that a person receives more help when smiling. Nevertheless, this effect of smiling was only tested when the smiler was requesting help. An experiment was completed in which 8 confederates (4 young men and 4 young women) tested 800 passersby. In half of the cases, the confederate smiled at the passerby. A few seconds after this interaction, the passersby had the opportunity to help another confederate who dropped his/her computer diskettes on the ground. This research found that the previous smile of a stranger enhanced later helping behavior. A positive mood induced by the smile of the first confederate could help to explain this result.

■ The positive effect of smiling on interpersonal attraction and perception is well established in the psychosocial literature. Adding a smile to the photograph of a face leads to more favorable perception of the target, and this effect was found on multiple personality dimensions. Lau (1982) reports finding that when smiling, a target was perceived to be more intelligent than the same, nonsmiling, target. Otta, Pereira, Delavati, Pimentel and Pires (1993) report that they found that a smiling person receives more positive scores on the dimensions of leadership, optimism, sincerity, and kindness. A smile also enhances helping behavior toward the smiling person. Tidd and Lockard (1978) report that patrons in a bar give significantly larger tips to a waitress who approached them with a broad smile than to one with a minimal smile. In a similar vein, Solomon et al. (1981) report that a smiling confederate in a large department store receives more help than a nonsmiling one.

The effect of smiling on helping behavior is well established, but the factors that explain this effect still remain in question. One possible explanation is that a positive perception of the solicitor, mediated by his/her smile, could predispose the subject to comply with his/her request. Research connecting perception of the solicitor with helping behavior has found that positive perceptions of the solicitor increases helping behavior (Takemura, 1993). For Tidd and Lockard (1978), who have found that a smile by a waitress enhanced her tips, the result was explained in terms of reciprocal altruism. Patrons gave the waitress larger tips to reciprocate the better service of the waitress. For Solomon et al. (1981), the effect of smiling is explained in terms of anonymity. When a stranger smiles at the subject, he/she

becomes identifiable and thus is more likely to receive help than is a control subject who did not smile and thus is more anonymous.

Even though these explanations of the effect of smiling on helping behavior are of interest, they have not been tested empirically. They also pre-suppose that smiling has an effect only in the interaction between the smiler and the recipient of the smile. Another possible explanation is that smiling enhances a positive mood that, in return, enhances helping behavior (Deutsch & Lamberti, 1986).

Many experimental studies report finding that positive mood activation when compared to neutral mood activation, increases helping behavior (Bizman, Yinin, Ronco & Schachar, 1980; Forgas, 1997, 1998; Harris & Smith, 1975; Job, 1987; Levin & Isen, 1975; Rind, 1997; Weyant, 1978). This positive mood can be activated in many different ways and, most of the time, does not require elaborate means. A false attribution of success or failure in a task leads to activation of a positive/negative mood that, in turn, affects helping behavior in a way that is congruent with the mood (Clark & Waddell, 1986). Finding a coin in a phone box or on the ground is sufficient to induce a positive mood that in return enhances altruism (Batson, Coke, Chard, Smith & Talaferro, 1979; Blevins & Murphy, 1974; Isen & Levin, 1972; Isen & Simmonds, 1978; Levin & Isen, 1975). To be offered a candy or a cookie brings about the same effect (Harris & Smith, 1975; Isen & Levin, 1972).

Some empirical studies also find that familiar environmental factors activate a positive mood and helping behavior. For instance, the amount of tips given by customers increases on sunny days (Cunningham, 1979). Further, Rind (1996) reports finding that even information about the weather, given by a waiter to customers who had not yet seen the color of the sky, is sufficient to make the waiter's tip vary, depending on whether he told them it was sunny or rainy. Even pleasant smells can enhance helping behavior. Pleasant ambient smells (e.g., baking, cooking, roasting coffee) in a shopping mall lead passersby to provide change for a dollar to a same-sex confederate more readily than in the absence of such odors (Baron, 1997). A heavy perfume worn by a female-confederate led the passersby to help her in a more substantial way. Pleasant ambient music also has an important effect on helping behavior (Galizio & Hendricks, 1972).

Another way of inducing moods in participants consists of exposing them to pleasant versus unpleasant pictures or texts (Forgas, 1997, 1998). In this respect, it has been shown that a drawing may activate a positive mood and, as a consequence, helping behavior. Drawing a smiling face on the bill increases the rate of tips granted to a waitress (Rind & Bordia, 1996). In the same way, a mere hand-made drawing of the sun, added at the bottom of the bill of customers having a drink outside a café, led them to tip the waiter or waitress more frequently and in a much more substantial way (Guéguen & LeGohérel, 2000). Attaching a small card with a joke printed on it to the bill produced the same effects (Guéguen, 2002).

These studies seem to show that the effect of a positive mood on helping behavior is robust and is very easily obtained. It thus appears possible that the effect of smiling on helping is mediated by a positive mood. Kleinke and Walton (1982) have found that in an interaction with a confederate who was instructed to smile, participants reported significantly more positive feelings than in a control situation where the confederate was instructed to show a neutral expression. So, if the effect of smiling on helping behavior is mediated by a positive mood and not just by a positive perception of the smiler, then it might be expected that smiling would enhance helping behavior even when the solicitor is not the smiler. To test this hypothesis, an experiment was carried out in which subjects had the opportunity to help a confederate a few seconds after another confederate had smiled/not smiled to them.

METHOD

Participants

Eight hundred passersby (400 men and 400 women), aged approximately between 20 and 50, served as participants in this experiment. They were randomly selected from passersby who were walking in a supermarket of a medium-size city (more than 100,000 inhabitants) in a very attractive spot. This provincial town was Vannes, located in the west of France on the Breton Atlantic Coast.

Procedure

Eight individuals, 4 men and 4 women, aged 19–21 years old, served as confederates in this experiment. All of them were first-year students from the Department of Marketing at the University of Bretagne-Sud in Vannes and volunteered to participate as confederates in this experiment. Both the female and male confederates were selected by two other male and two other female evaluators who were asked to select confederates on their physical attractiveness. These evaluators were instructed to evaluate the attractiveness of student-photographs and to select people, males and females, with neutral attractiveness. After this, those selected were solicited to participate in the experiment, which they all agreed to do. The confederates were dressed casually and similarly to young people of their age (t-shirts, jeans and light colored tennis shoes). Each confederate was instructed to set off down the stairs and look for the first participant, man or woman, aged between 20 to 50, who took the stairs. The confederate was instructed to look the participant in the eyes. If the participant returned the gaze, then he/she was instructed to smile (or not) at the subject and then to look in another direction. The smiling/not smiling condition was assigned randomly. Following this manipulation, a second confederate, who was blind to the smiling condition, appeared in front of the participant. This second confederate held a portfolio and a package of computer diskettes in one hand and two bags of food in the other. The confederate was instructed not

to look **the participant** in the eyes because some studies have shown that gaze had an effect on compliance to a request (Brockner, Pressman, Cabitt, & Mora, 1982; Guéguen & Jacob, 2002). When the participant was two meters (6/7 feet) in front of the confederate, the confederate simulated a difficulty with his/her two grocery bags and accidentally dropped the diskettes on the ground. Still avoiding eye contact, the confederate bent down to collect the diskettes that had scattered all around him/her. An observer located not far away evaluated if the participant helped the confederate. Afterwards, the observer asked the first confederate to say if he/she had or had not smiled to the participant. The scene was then repeated until each confederate of each sex had tested 100 subjects (50 males and 50 females) in the two conditions (50 in the smile condition and 50 in the no-smile condition).

RESULTS

As no differences were found between the confederates $X^2(7, 800) = 11.24, p > .10$, the data were aggregated for the men and for the women confederates. The number of passersby who helped, according to their gender, the two confederates' genders and the experimental conditions, is presented in table 1.

A log-linear statistical method was used to analyze our data. A significant effect for smiling was found, $X^2(1, 799) = 9.16, p < .005$. When the first confederate smiled, 29.5 % of the passersby helped the second confederate whereas only 20.3 % helped the second confederate in the non-smiling condition. No significant effect of the first or of the second confederate's gender was found ($p > .20$ for both). Similarly, no significant effect of participant gender was found ($p > .20$). A 2 (smile/no smile) \times 2 (1st male/female confederate) \times 2 (2nd male/female confederate) \times 2 (male/female participant) log-linear analysis revealed a significant interaction between the 2nd confederate's gender and the participant's gender, $X^2(4, 796) = 17.81, p < .001$. Results showed that male participants were more helpful toward female (30.0 %) than male confederates (17.0 %) whereas female participants were more helpful toward male (30.0 %) than female confederates (23.0 %). This was the only statistically significant interaction in this factorial analysis.

DISCUSSION

In the current experiment, female participants helped male confederates more readily than the female confederates, whereas male participants helped female confederates more often than male confederates. This pattern of results is congruent with previous studies (Bickman, 1974). This effect could be explained by traditional roles of self-presentation in opposite-sex behavior (Gruder & Cook, 1971; Harris & Bays, 1973). For these authors, a member of the opposite-sex would be helped more because the helper wanted to look good in his/her eyes. Seduction motivation could explain

TABLE 1
Rate of Subjects (in %) Who Stopped and Helped According to the Smile Condition (Smile/No Smile) and Gender of the Confederates and the Participants¹

	No Smile				Smile				Average 2 nd Confederate
	First Confederate Male		First Confederate Female		First Confederate Male		First Confederate Female		
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Second confederate male	16.0	20.0	12.0	22.0	12.0	40.0	28.0	36.0	23.3
Second confederate female	24.0	24.0	24.0	20.0	28.0	24.0	44.0	24.0	26.5
Average (1st confederate)	21.0		19.5		26.0		33.0		
Average (smile/no smile)	20.3				29.5				

¹There are 50 subjects per case.

why men helped women and why women helped men more favorably than solicitors of the same-sex as the requester.

Our results show that being smiled at by a stranger enhances subsequent helping behavior towards another person. These findings are congruent with the results found in the literature connecting smiling and helping behavior (Solomon et al., 1981; Tidd & Lockard, 1978) and confirm the influence of smiling on helping behavior in a new situation. Furthermore, these findings show that smiling enhances helping behavior toward a person who is not the smiler. These findings are congruent with other results concerning the effect of nonverbal behavior on helping behavior. Deutsch and Lamberti (1986) found that people were more likely to help a confederate who had dropped books if they had been socially rewarded by an experimenter a few minutes beforehand. In Deutsch and Lamberti's experiment, the social reward was manipulated by various nonverbal behaviors such as smiling and eye contact *versus* cold and distant facial expressions and no eye contact, and by different verbal behaviors such as pleasant conversation *versus* abrupt conversation. However, Deutsch and Lamberti's study amalgamated various nonverbal behaviors and the effect of simply smiling was not tested. Moreover, Deutsch and Lamberti tested the effects of positive and negative nonverbal behavior on subsequent helping behavior. In our experiment, smiling was the only nonverbal behavior manipulated and the effect of positive social behavior was compared to neutral social behavior. Our findings seem to support the hypothesis that smiling is sufficient to enhance subsequent helping behavior toward a confederate who was not the smiler.

Such an effect seems to support the idea that neither positive perceptions of the smiling confederate (Lau, 1982) nor reciprocal altruism (Tidd & Lockard, 1978) nor identification theory (Solomon et al., 1981) are complete theoretical explanations of the effect found in the present research. These explanations supposed that smiling had an effect only between the smiler and the participant, whereas our results show that smiling has an effect beyond this relationship. In the present experiment, the participant had no reason to reciprocate altruism towards the second confederate, no additional variable had affected his/her perception of the second confederate and the participant was clearly anonymous for the second confederate.

It therefore seems that another explanation must be evoked to explain these results. Kleinke and Walton (1982) have found that a smile by confederates enhanced positive perceptions but also induced a good feeling in the participant. Various studies have shown that nonverbal behavioral cues enhance positive mood in the target. Fisher, Rytting and Heslin (1976) have found that touch led the person who was touched to feel more positively. The same effect is found with gaze (Jourard & Friedman, 1970). These findings are congruent with the results found by Kleinke and Walton and confirm that nonverbal behavior affects mood. A host of previous studies have shown that positive mood is associated with altruism (Bizman, Yinin, Ronco & Schachar, 1980; Forgas, 1997, 1998; Harris & Smith, 1975;

Job, 1987; Levin & Isen, 1975; Rind, 1997; Weyant, 1978). In the current experiment, then, it is possible that the effect of smiling by the first confederate on the participant's helping behavior towards the second confederate is mediated by a positive mood activated by this nonverbal behavior. Of course, this mood activation hypothesis needs to be further studied to substantiate its theoretical validity, and in order to produce clear understanding of the link between affective states and smiling. An evaluation of the participants' moods by numerical scales should be introduced in these studies.

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