

# **“On The Town”**

## ***Is Polite Being Skipped a Generation?***

**Richard Martorano Ed.D**

Is it my imagination or has the concept of being polite, courteous, respectful of your elders and having basic manners skipped a couple of generations? Is it my imagination or have the phrases, “thank you”, “you’re welcome”, “please”, “may I” “could you please”, “would you please” and “may I help you?” been eliminated from the vocabulary of a couple of generations?

### **Am I Showing My Age?**

Has the concept of opening the door for the elderly or a woman, letting someone switch lanes while driving, helping someone who looks like they need a hand, making the extra effort to provide good service or just being pleasant skipped a couple of generations or am I showing my age?

On television today, rudeness is now “the thing” on reality and talk shows. People being vulgar and rude to one another in contrived stressful situations are today’s TV bread and butter. Millions of viewers watching that behavior make networks and cable systems a lot of money. Unfortunately, TV, movies, media and merchandisers often portray rudeness and aggressiveness as being “in and cool”. How we talk, walk, dress and treat others is “all part of the persona”. No wonder young people today have a difficult time separating fantasy from reality. Not wanting to be left out, they blindly follow the examples of what they see their heroes and heroines do and say on the small and big screen. Who can blame them? They don’t know any better because in some cases their young parents don’t know any better either.

### **A “Mannerless” Society**

As sociologist Chuck Gallozzi says in his book *Personal Development*, “Young people today have yet to learn that rudeness is the imitation of strength practiced by the weak”. I love that. Some of our young haven’t quite figured out that polite people love life while those who are rude are bitter. I don’t believe rudeness is a class, gender or race thing. I think rudeness and being impolite over the years has become cultural and indicative of our changed society today. I know those are strong words. I honestly think that some of our citizens have such limited education and underdeveloped communication skills that they don’t realize they are being rude.

I am not a sociologist, so how we evolved to a “mannerless” society will be studied by far greater minds than mine. Unfortunately, you and I have to live in and with that society today. Gallozzi says, “a rude or mannerless person needs to strike out at someone to satisfy their lack of self-esteem”. Unfortunately today, that someone might be you or me at the checkout counter of a retail store or a fast food restaurant. And be careful – when someone strikes out today, he might have a gun.

### **How Much Better Could We Make The World?**

The seemingly trivial acts we perform daily touch and influence the lives of people. How much better could we make the world if we demonstrated civility, good manners, good behaviour, good conduct, politeness, decency, respect for others, thoughtfulness, kindness and just plain pleasantness as a regular part of our daily lives?

I don’t know if virtues like those can be taught in a classroom or even if it is the responsibility of teachers to include good behavior as part of the curriculum. I think teachers have the right to expect good behavior, but it is assumed that good behavior is taught in the home.

New Zealand sociologist Paul Johnson writes: “Think about it. Would a considerate person steal? A kind student, bully? A thoughtful person cheat? A respectful person, murder? No, because manners and morals flow from the same principle: consideration of others.”

If I understand that quote correctly, Johnson is saying that as we raise the level of courtesy that is practiced in society, we lower the crime rate! That works for me!

No one was rude or disrespectful to me this week causing me to write this article. It just seems to me that there is a lot of mayhem in our culture today. In closing: “Why can’t we just all be nice to each other!”

*Dr. Richard (Rick) Martorano is the owner of R. Martorano Productions LLC and Music, Etc. Inc. He is a prominent musician, producer, composer, music director and adjunct university professor residing in Port Orange, Florida. He may be reached at [rjaem222@gmail.com](mailto:rjaem222@gmail.com).*