

Human Relationships

Social Responsibility

Question 1: Discuss bystanderism.

Diffusion of responsibility:

Diffusion of responsibility refers to the tendency to subjectively divide the personal **responsibility** to help by the number of **bystanders** present. **Bystanders** are less likely to intervene in emergency situations as the size of the group increases, as they feel less personal **responsibility**.

When several people watch an incident like the Kitty Genovese murder, they seem to reason that somebody else can, should, and probably will offer assistance. This is known as the **diffusion of responsibility**. This could explain why people are generally more likely to help when they are the only person available to offer assistance.

Darley and Latané

Darley and Latane (1968) did a laboratory experiment in which they told student participants that they were going to be interviewed about the kind of personal problems faced by students when they first move to university. They were told that in order to preserve anonymity they would be interviewed over an intercom. Some of the students were told there were five other people in the discussion group; some were told that there were only two other students, and some were told that there was only one other student taking part in the study. All the comments they heard from other group members were actually pre-recorded. At a certain point, one of the voices cried for help and made sounds of severe choking, as if the person was having an epileptic seizure. When the students thought they were the only person there, 85 per cent rushed to help. When they thought there was one other person, this dropped to 65 per cent. And when they thought there were four other people, the figure dropped again, to 31 per cent. This study shows that believing somebody else will intervene lowers the probability of a person taking responsibility.

Piliavin:

Background information

Piliavin's classic study is based on his **Arousal Cost Reward Model** of helping. According to this model, we are motivated to help people not because of empathy, but as a way of reducing negative feelings. The "arousal" may be fear or surprise, but it could also be disgust or sympathy. It is not simply a stress response reaction, but more of a negative emotional state.

When recognizing this negative state, we then weigh the costs of helping versus not helping. There are several options for reducing the negative state, including helping, leaving the scene or rationalization -

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Discuss a biological approach to social responsibility.

Marsh et al (2014), Bartal, Decety and Mason (2011)

Marsh – biologically brain structure

Decety – Kin selection

ERQ example:

<p>The biological approach argues that prosocial behaviour may be hardwired in the brain. In other words, there is a biological component of prosocial behaviour that has an evolutionary advantage. Evolutionary theorists argue that prosocial behaviour is a form of inclusive fitness. Animal models have also been used to show that the behaviour is “natural” rather than learned – and research on people who show extreme prosocial behaviour have indicated that there may be differences in the brain. In spite of the different ways that the question has been investigated, the biological approach has limitations.</p>	<p>The introduction is focused on the question and there is a clear outline of how the question will be addressed. The introduction ends with a thesis statement.</p>
<p>It would make sense that prosocial behaviour is “hardwired” in the brain. The concept of inclusive fitness argues that by helping other members of its species, an organism increases the overall “fitness” of the gene pool. This may also be why people are more likely to help the people that are most closely related to them. Kin Selection theory argues that we are more likely to help members of our own family because we want to protect the genes and guarantee that they are passed down.</p>	<p>There is an explanation of the Kin Selection theory.</p>
<p>This theory, however, is problematic. Much of the data on people who have carried out altruistic acts are anecdotal. It is not really possible to know the motivation for helping in most of these cases. However, Simmons did a study to see whether close relatives were more likely to be kidney donors. The findings were that parents were most willing to donate a kidney for one of their children, followed by siblings for each other. The findings showed that children were less likely to donate for a parent and were least likely to donate to a stranger.</p>	<p>The theory is evaluated. A study is used to support the theory - and</p>

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shabbily dressed person slumped by the side of the road. The participants were put in different situations where time pressure was an important situational variable.

The researchers also wanted to examine if reminding participants about the parable of the Good Samaritan would influence their willingness to help, but they assumed based on the parable that this would not be the case. The researchers argue that the Samaritan in the parable was a social outcast and therefore had more time to offer help than the other two people represented who were probably hurrying to do some business or attend some meeting. They see the Samaritan as a religious and ethical example but at the same time he is a contrast to the kind of religiosity represented by the others in the parable. The researchers suggest that there are two *situational* variables that affect helping behaviour according to the parable. The first one is the content of one's thinking, and the second is the amount of hurry in one's journey. The *dispositional* variable is the differing types of religiosity.

Procedure and results

The aim of the field experiment was to investigate if participants would help a stranger that clearly needed help. Helping the stranger came at a cost - that is, they were under time pressure to get to a meeting, and helping would force them to deviate from the original plan.

The researchers tested two hypotheses, both based on the parable.

1. People who encounter someone in need of help while thinking religious and ethical thoughts would be no more likely to offer aid than people thinking about something else.
2. People encountering someone in need of help when they are in a hurry would be less likely to offer aid than persons who are not in a hurry.

The participants in the field experiment were 40 male seminary students at Princeton Theological Seminary, i.e. students studying to become priests. They were deceived in that they were told that they were participating in a study on religious education and vocations. The entire experiment was run over a 3-day period.

In the first session, participants answered personality questionnaires to determine their level of religiosity. In the second session, the participants began experimental procedures in one building and were asked to report to another building for subsequent procedures. While the participants passed between the two buildings, they passed the "victim" in the alleyway. All participants were tested individually.

When a participant arrived at the experiment he was told that he was participating in a study of vocational careers of seminary students. Then he was asked to give a 3-to-5-minute talk based on a text on either what he thought could be relevant for a good minister (task-relevant condition) or the passage from the Bible with the parable on the Good Samaritan (helping-relevant condition). When the participant had read the passage, the experimenter came back and gave instructions of how to reach the other building. The participants were given further instructions that placed them in either a "high-hurry"