

How Understanding the Psychology of Helping Behavior Started



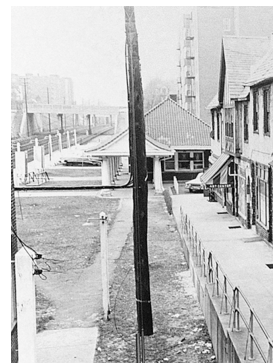
On March 13, 1964, Kitty Genovese was stabbed to death in front of her home in front of 37 witnesses watching from their windows.

After the attacker stabbed her, one man yelled at him and he began to flee.

When the assailant realized no one came out to help her, he returned and stabbed her again. When she cried for help, the lights in neighboring apartments came on and he fled again.

He returned for a 3rd time 15 minutes later and stabbed her to death. It was 30 minutes after the first attack before anyone called the police (who arrived 2 minutes later).

Why did no one help her? It is easy to attribute this behavior to our culture's alienation, apathy, indifference and unconscious sadistic impulses—these are all dispositional explanations that underestimate that social forces at work (the fundamental attributional error, again), which allows us to believe that we are “not the type of people who would fail to help”.



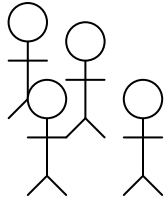
Often ignored are the social factors (situational factors) that reduced the likelihood that people will help:

- diffusion of responsibility
- pluralistic ignorance (not in your textbook)
- informational social influence (social proof)

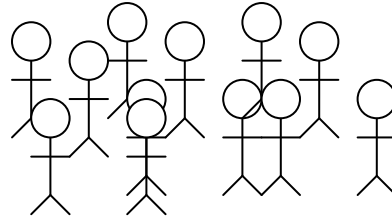
Diffusion of Responsibility

Diffusion of responsibility is the phenomena in which the presence of other people makes it less likely that any individual will help someone in distress because the obligation to intervene is shared among all the onlookers.

Help!



Help!



In my first aid class, when requesting aid, or asking someone to dial 911, look at someone, or point to someone and say:

- “You, call 911”
- “You, get help”

DO NOT SAY

- “**CALL 911**”
- “**SOMEONE GET HELP**”

Based on what we know about pluralistic ignorance, everyone will think you are talking to someone else.

Diffusion of responsibility can help explain the following:

- In general, you are more likely to receive help on a country back road compared to a busy freeway.
- When I was living with two roommates, there was a lot of stuff in the fridge that no one knew who owned (and consequently it has been there for years).

A clerk who needs help checking out customers at the register--based on the idea of Diffusion of Responsibility

- What is a good way to request help?
- What is a bad way to request help?

Pluralistic Ignorance

People's lack of awareness of how other people in "the group" are thinking, feeling, or responding. This lack of awareness can lead to behavior that conforms to the status quo.



Student examples of pluralistic ignorance

Pluralistic ignorance: People's lack of awareness of how other people in "the group" are thinking, feeling, or responding. This lack of awareness can lead to conformity.

At a party a few weeks ago, John told this joke but I didn't get it. I wanted to ask about it, but I figured that I would look stupid because I thought everyone else understood it except me. Later, I found out that no one had understood it and we had all thought that everyone understood so none of us asked about it.

Last night my dad flew in for graduation on Saturday. I met him at his hotel in Eugene. I was very hungry when I went over but he didn't mention anything about food. I assumed that he must have eaten on the plane and I would wait until later and eat at my house. After about a half an hour of visiting my stepmother said, "I'm starving, where's a good place to eat?" My dad joined in and said that he was also hungry.

Sandy, Joe, Donna, and Steve were out drinking at some local bars. Eventually they decided it was time to head home. Joe had driven them all to the bar and he was pretty blasted. Sandy wasn't sure if he should be driving, but no one else seemed worried about it so she got in the car. However, Donna and Steve were thinking the same thing that Sandy was but they didn't say anything either because they both thought that no one else was worried about it.

Social Proof (informational social influence)

Deciding what the appropriate and acceptable behavior is by imitating the behavior of other people (this is not the definition in your textbook).



Student and personal examples of social proof (informational social influence)

As an instructor, I am involved in many fire drills. After spending about ten minutes outside people wonder if it is all right to go back in. Usually someone comes out and gives the okay signal. During the time it is unclear whether or not you should go in, people look for is if other people are going back in. The inference is that if others are going in, it must be all right to go in.

Sometimes we do not know what the speed limit is. This is particularly true if we are unfamiliar with the area. If we do not know what it is, often we around and see what other people are doing. By observing the behavior of others, we infer what the speed limit is.

Darek was in a bar that had a no-smoking sign posted on the wall. He likes to smoke but wasn't sure if he should violate the prohibition in the bar. When he looked around, he noticed quite a few people smoking near the pool tables so he figured it must be OK to light up, at least in that area of the bar.

If the rebels troops are suppose to evacuate as the Empire closes in on them, one clue is to see what others are doing.

Manufacturing Informational Social Influence

Groups, organizations, corporations, political parties and individuals can “manufacture” and exaggerate the predominance of a particular belief, thus affecting public opinion and policy. The form of persuasion is by inference and manipulation of the social environment, not a thoughtful dialogue.

Examples:

- Microsoft: They tried to put pressure on state attorney generals, by “manufacturing” letters of protest of their lawsuits against Microsoft.
- Polls and television and radio “call-in polls”
- Politics: Presidential appearances are by invitation only. What you see on television are his supporters, not critics.
- Bartenders: They never empty a tip jar completely. They leave money in their tip jar to implicitly tell their customers that they are to leave money in the jar for them.
- My plan for the Salvation Army at Christmas: Have confederates with rolls of pennies always drop off pennies in the containers.



Review of some psychological factors that help us understand the Kitty Genovese murder

- Diffusion of responsibility:
The phenomena in which the presence of other people makes it less likely that any individual will help someone in distress because the obligation to intervene is shared among all the onlookers.
- Pluralistic ignorance:
People's lack of awareness of how other people in "the group" are thinking, feeling, or responding.
- Social proof (informational social influence):
Deciding what the appropriate and acceptable behavior is by imitating the behavior of other people (this is not the definition in your textbook).

How do these concepts help you understand the behavior of the 37 witnesses to the Kitty Genovese murder?

- They say that knowledge is power. How does this knowledge empower you?
- How does this help you understand other events in your life, the your job, or around the world?

When do attitudes predict behavior?

Like traits, attitudes have a hard time predicting behavior. There are some conditions in which attitudes are likely to influence or determine behavior. You are more likely to behave in accordance with your attitudes when (page 483):





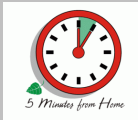
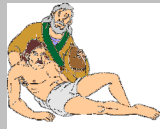

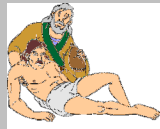
- Attitudes are extremely or are frequently expressed,
- Attitudes have been formed through direct experience,
- You are very knowledgeable about the subject,
- You have a vested interest in the subject. If you personally stand to gain or lose something on a specific issue, you're more likely to act in accordance with your attitudes, and
- You anticipate a favorable outcome or response from others for doing so.

Do attitudes predict helping behavior or are there situational factors that interfere?

A seminary student has been asked to give a lecture on the how to get a job as a seminary student **OR** the Good Samaritan parable. Due to scheduling constraints, he is told to give the lecture in five minutes **OR** 30 minutes across campus. As he crosses campus, he encounters a slumped man coughing, groaning and head down. Does he offer help?

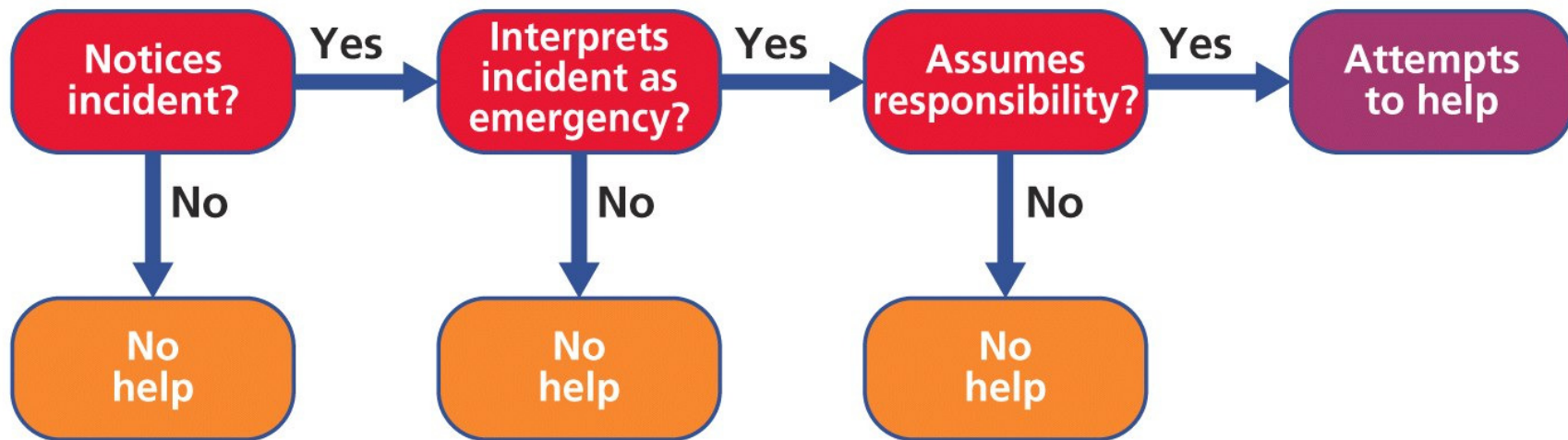
Do attitudes predict behavior? Will those who are preparing a lecture on the Good Samaritan help a stranger?

Which condition(s) had the highest rate of helping behavior?

		Time to give lecture	
		5 minutes	30 minutes
Topic of lecture	How to get a job	<p>(a) You have 5 minutes to give the lecture on <u>how to get a job</u></p>  	<p>(b) You have 30 minutes to give the lecture on <u>how to get a job</u></p>  
	Good Samaritan parable	<p>(c) You have 5 minutes to give the lecture on the <u>Good Samaritan parable</u></p>  	<p>(d) You have 30 minutes to give the lecture on the <u>Good Samaritan parable</u></p>  



Latané and Darley's Model of Helping Behavior



What keeps us from noticing the event?

What keeps us from interpreting the event as an emergency?

What keeps us from assuming responsibility for helping?