

How Understanding the Psychology of Helping Behavior Started

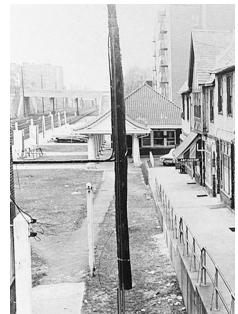
On March 13, 1964, Kitty Genovese was stabbed to death in front of her home in front of 37 witnesses watching from their windows.



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).



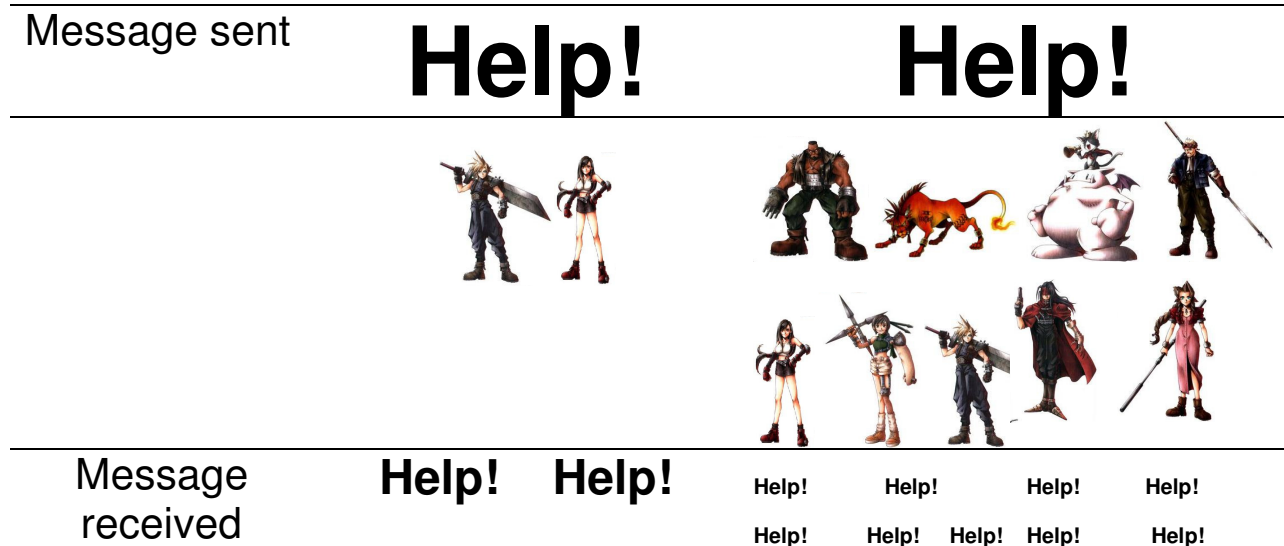
Why did no one help her? It is easy to attribute this behavior to our culture's alienation, apathy, indifference and unconscious sadistic impulses—these are all dispositional explanations that underestimates that social forces at work (the fundamental attributional error, again), which allows us to believe 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
- 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.



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.



"All those in favor say 'Aye.' "

"Aye"

"Aye"

"Aye"

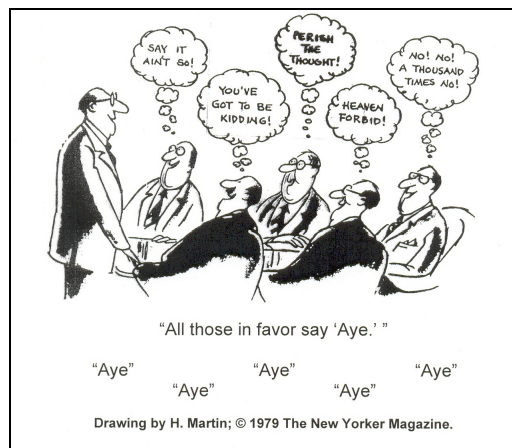
"Aye"

"Aye"

Drawing by H. Martin; © 1979 The New Yorker Magazine.

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.

At the apartment complex I was living at, there is a recycling bin for glass. I wasn't sure whether or not I was supposed to remove the labels or not. To answer this question, I looked in the bin to see what other people did. The glass jars had labels on it, so it must be all right to leave the labels on. A few weeks later, there was a note on the door of the tenants indicating the rules for recycling...one of them was removing labels from glass jars.

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.

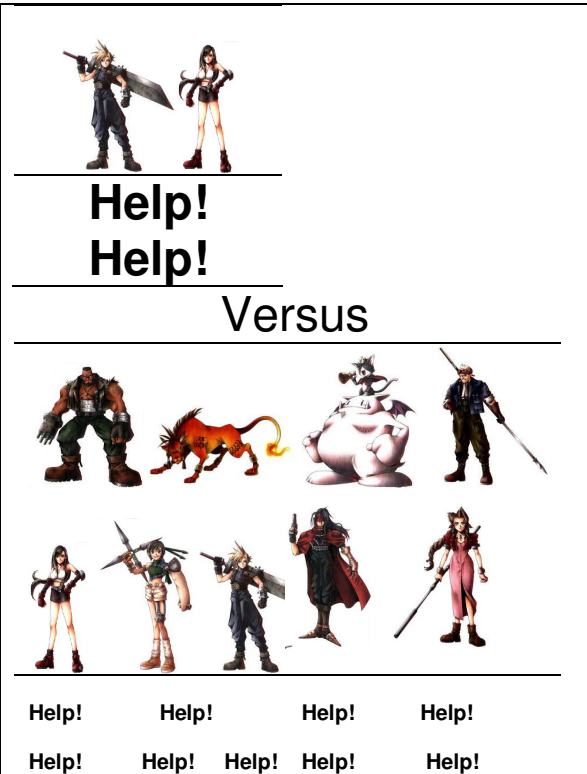
Examples:

- **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.

Some bartenders leave a jar on the bar for tips. To let customers know that the correct behavior is to leave money in the jar, they stimulate tips by leaving money in the jar to give the impression that previous customers folded money and left it in the jar is proper barroom behavior.

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

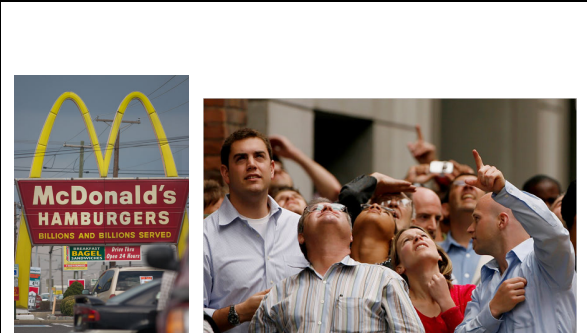
- Diffusion of responsibility:
The phenomena in which the presence of other people makes it less likely that any individual will help someone in distress because the obligation to intervene is shared among all the onlookers.



- 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).



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

Seminary students are 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, they are told to give the lecture in five minutes **OR** 30 minutes across campus. As each student crosses campus, he encounters a slumped man coughing, groaning and head down. Does he offer help?

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> 



Do attitudes predict behavior?

- Will those who are preparing a lecture on the Good Samaritan help a stranger?

Latané and Darley's Model of Helping Behavior



In order to provide help, one must:

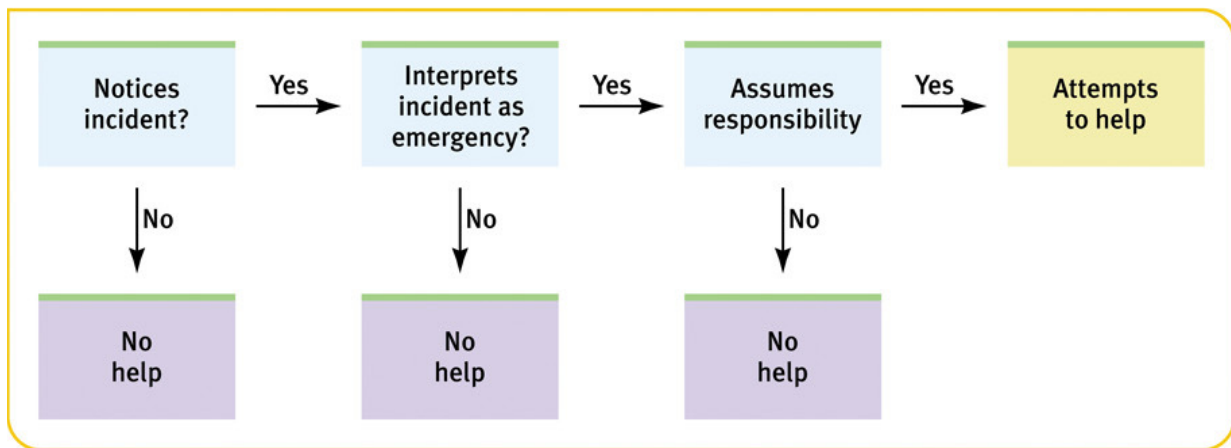


Image source: Psychology (2011), Myers

Cooperation: Collective traps

A collective trap is a problem or trap that arises when an individual pursues their own interests at the cost of the entire group. When everyone uses public goods to their own personal advantage, the public good quickly degrades to the detriment of the entire public.

“The Tragedy of the Commons”

A herding community uses a common pasture to graze cattle. At first there is no problem, but in time, the number of cattle reaches the carrying capacity of the land.



At this point, the utility of adding another animal to the herd has two components—a positive and a negative component. The positive utility consists of whatever profit can be made from raising one more animal. This profit belongs solely to the herder who adds the animal. The negative utility is a function of the additional overgrazing caused by a new animal. This cost is borne by all members of the community and negligible to any one herder.



The result is a dilemma in which each person benefits from adding another animal to the herd but the pursuit of individual self-interest leads to an outcome that is less than ideal—the overgrazing and rapid depletion of the grazing land.

Cooperation: The Prisoner's Dilemma

The Dilemma of the Commons is modeled with a problem called the Prisoner's Dilemma

		YOUR PARTNER	
		Cooperate	Defect
YOU	Cooperate	\$5 / \$5	0 / \$8
	Defect	\$8 / 0	\$2 / \$2

Your payoffs are represented by the numbers in red.

Your partner's payoffs are represented by the numbers in blue.

Social Psychology, 2/e Figure 13.11
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Most of us are not animal herders. How is this relevant for us? How does this help us understand social behavior and social issues?

What factors increase Cooperation or Competition?

Situational Determinants

The people you associate with affects levels of cooperation.

- Competitors compete and create a more competitive social environment
- Cooperators cooperate and create a more cooperative social environment

Whichever orientation people take (competition or cooperation), leads to the belief that the others have the similar view and their reciprocal behavior can lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Construal Processes

- Priming people with hostile words versus neutral words decreased cooperation. While you are primed with hostile words, you are primed by hostile social cues such as advertising, television, video games, news stories, etc.
- Competition increased when the Prisoner's Dilemma was described as a Wall Street game versus community game

Do we talk about peace or war? Do we talk about reconciliation or divorce, reject or award custody

Culture

- Training in economics increases competition
- Cooperative cultures that depended on others for survival are more likely to cooperate



Social Psychology, 2/e Unnumbered 13 p527b
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Evolution: Tit for Tat

Cooperate, but do to others what other do to you. If you cooperate, I will cooperate. If you compete, I will compete