

Darley and Latane (1968)

Using college students from New York University, this was a laboratory experiment where participants were told they would be having a conversation about living in a high stress urban environment over an intercom system (to protect anonymity). They were told that each person would be allowed to talk for two minutes uninterrupted. Participants were told that there were either five, two, or only one other people in their group. In reality, there were no other group members and all the speeches they heard were prerecorded. At one point, one of the voices would make choking sounds as if they were having a seizure.

The question was how would the size of the perceived group impact the participant's likelihood to take action and attempt to help the person having the seizure.

Results:

Believed they were the only witness: 85% helped

One other witness: 65% helped

Four other witnesses: 31% helped

Conclusion/Key Term:

The researchers concluded that believing someone else will intervene when in a group lowers the likelihood of a person helping. They called this the *Diffusion of Responsibility*.

Darley and Latane (1969)

The researchers asked participants to sit in a waiting room before participating in an experiment. The participants were either waiting alone or with a confederate in the room with them. While they were waiting, they heard a female researcher fall and cry out in the next room. If there was a confederate, they did not react to the noise. The question was whether participants would be more or less likely to try to help the fallen researcher if they were accompanied by another witness.

Results:

Participants acted and tried to give help with more frequency and quicker if they were alone.

However, those who did not react often said that they failed to do so because the other person did not react. They thus figured that it was not an emergency.

Conclusions:

It is possible that people will look to others to determine if a situation is an emergency. For example, domestic disturbances can often be viewed as personal relationships and thus not a true emergency.

Piliavin et al. (1969)

This was a naturalistic experiment in which the researchers staged an emergency on a subway car in New York City. The participants were thus an opportunity sample of individuals who happened to be riding in the same subway car. The research occurred on the same car during a 7.5 minute ride between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

The researchers created two unique situations. In each a 25-35 year old "victim" would fall to the floor after 70 seconds of riding. In one situation, the victim was a man pretending to be sick. In the other, they man was pretending to be drunk.

Two Independent variables were tested: 1. The victim; and 2. The size of the crowd on the subway car.

Results:

Overall, 93% of the trials resulted in witnesses helping the "victim." In the case of the sick man with a cane, he was helped 100% of the time with the median time of 5 seconds. The drunk man received help 81% of the time with a median time of 109 seconds.

No diffusion of responsibility was observed.

Conclusion/Key Terms:

From this study, Piliavin et al. proposed the *Arousal-Cost-Reward Model*. This model argues that before helping, people first need to be aroused and have motivation to help. This relates closely with the idea of negative-state relief.

In order to help, they will also weigh the costs and rewards of helping or not helping.

For example, in this situation there would be few costs for not helping the drunk and many costs for not helping the sick man.

Levine and Crowther (2008) Part A

This was a series of experiments which all examined the question of if groups always would lead to the bystander effect. In the first experiment, participants were asked to imagine a an emergency situation. The participants were also told to imagine a range of groups (both in size and make-up) that they could be with. The researchers read the following excerpt that was adjusted for each situation...

“Imagine you are walking through town. It is about 4 o’clock in the afternoon. You are walking along in the same direction as 1 other person / 5 other people, who is [are] a stranger [strangers] to you / a friend [friends] of yours / a student [students] you recognize from the university but have never spoken to before. Imagine this [these] stranger [strangers] / friend [friends] / student [students] next to you.

As you are walking, you see a man and a woman who have clearly been arguing. As you get closer, they begin to scuffle. He slaps her with an open hand. Then he grabs her by the lapels of her jacket. It looks as if he is about to hit her again.”

The question was, whether the group make-up could alter the likelihood of bystanderism.

Results:

Participants who envisioned themselves with friends were more likely to intervene, especially when they thought they were with five friends.

Participants who envisioned themselves with strangers, especially those with five strangers, were less likely to intervene.

In other words, “increasing group size inhibited intervention in a street violence scenario when bystanders were strangers but encouraged intervention when bystanders were friends” (Levine and Crowther, 2008)

Conclusion:

This showed that group size alone does not always lead to bystanderism. Being in a group of friends empowered individuals and actually made them more likely to intervene. This finding is related to the social identity theory and in-group favoritism as well.

Levine and Crowther (2008) Part B

This was a series of experiments which all examined the question of if groups always would lead to the bystander effect. In the third study, participants were placed in groups and told that they would watch a video recording of a real life domestic abuse case that was caught on tape at a shopping mall. The participants were placed in groups of either 3 women; 3 men; 2 women and 1 man; and 2 men and 1 woman. They were told that the responses to the questions would be compared between men and women to make them aware of the differences. After watching the video, they were told to imagine that they saw the event in real life and were in the group they were in. The question was whether the group formation would impact the likelihood of the individuals to intervene.

Results:

Women were more likely to intervene when in the (physical) presence of a group of women than when alone. Moreover, women were less likely to intervene when surrounded by men than in any other group condition.

Men were most likely to intervene when they were the only male in a group of women. Moreover, the other group conditions neither facilitated nor inhibited helping.

Conclusion:

The makeup of the members of the group can impact the likelihood of bystanderism.